

## Principles for Environmentally Sustainable Tourism – A Starting Point

Reserves such as those that comprise the TWWHA were set aside to protect nature and cultural heritage and to allow visitors to experience these values while protecting the environment.

These areas are largely undeveloped, and new development within them will invariably disturb or destroy the values for which the areas have been reserved. It is for this reason that use and development which does not 'present' the natural and cultural values of the area is discouraged and generally prohibited on reserved land, in particular higher conservation status areas such as national parks.

It is recognised however that there are uses which enable the values to be presented and which, if managed well, will have negligible long term impact on the values. Such environmentally sustainable uses that present the natural and cultural values are generally regarded as acceptable, providing that they are controlled and well regulated.

There is in Tasmania a history of revoking reserved areas for non-allowed uses (e.g., revocation of part of Mt Field National Park for logging), or to use reserved areas for highly inappropriate development (e.g., the flooding of Lake Pedder and the proposed damming of the Franklin River).

There have also been ongoing pushes for increased tourism development in reserved areas, including the TWWHA, by elements of the tourism industry which see a market for accommodation within reserves (e.g., Cockle Creek resort, and the earlier Pumphouse Point developments) and mechanised access (helicopter or floatplane) to remote areas, and the opportunity to achieve a financial return for themselves.

Although such opportunities may be enjoyed by the clients and be profitable for the tourism operators involved, they can impact negatively on the natural values of the reserve (and in some cases the cultural values) as well as on the experience of other visitors (including less intrusive commercial operations). They arguably go well beyond what is required to 'present' the values and do not need to be located within the actual conservation areas. Such developments rarely bring much direct benefit to local communities. A separate, but related, issue is the alienation of public land for private profit that occurs when tourism development occurs within national parks.

In the long term such developments benefit neither Tasmania's reserve estate nor Tasmania's tourism industry.

It is therefore essential to have environmentally sustainable development practices in place, in particular in relation to tourism, which is the most likely development risk. These need to be based on sound, explicit principles.

**The TNPA, along with other Tasmanian Environment Non-Government Organisations, has developed the following set of principles as a basis for developing a framework for environmentally sustainable tourism in Tasmania's national parks:**

1. Tourism (and recreation) interests have a responsibility to pass on to future generations Tasmania's exceptional natural and cultural heritage in no poorer condition than we experience it.

2. Wilderness is a diminishing global asset which needs to be protected, not compromised.
3. Tourism (and recreational) ventures will be compatible with statutory management plans (and not require *ad hoc* changes); and will be established and managed in an ecologically sustainable manner.
4. Where facilities can be developed outside the TWWHA and national parks, such facilities and services will not be provided as concessions within the TWWHA or national parks.
5. New tourism (and recreational) initiatives will support and commercially contribute to communities living in juxtaposition with National Parks and other protected areas, so that the benefits flow to these communities.
6. Tourism (and recreational) initiatives should encourage a mutually beneficial relationship between tourism operators, rather than a competitive one.
7. Assessment of new tourism initiatives will be undertaken in a publicly transparent and accountable manner.

The TNPA and other Tasmanian ENGOs also encourage the development of an Environmentally Sustainable Tasmanian Tourism Strategy which, while supporting a diverse range of tourism initiatives that benefit all Tasmanians, is also protective of the State's exceptional values. Such an approach will ensure that appropriate and genuinely sustainable tourism ventures that complement existing tourism and new initiatives and meet real needs will be supported, while poorly thought out, unsustainable proposals that are not in the public interest will not proceed.

Tourism based on the above principles will be more inclusive, will spread the benefits of the tourism industry more broadly throughout the Tasmanian community, and will provide better long-term protection for the unique values protected within our conservation reserves.

**See also the Reference 3 (TNPA's 2010 election policies document) and Article 5.**