



TASMANIA'S 2030 VISITOR ECONOMY KEY DIRECTIONS PAPER

Summary

The Tasmanian National Parks Association Incorporated (TNPA) strongly supports the acknowledgement on page 25 (Key Direction 2) that “there are constraints to growth [including] the capacities of our natural areas” and the corresponding recommendation to invest “in data and research about forecast visitor growth and visitation patterns [in order to understand] carrying capacity, cumulative impact, limits and thresholds”.

The TNPA considers it probable that such research would confirm our concerns that over-crowding and over-development are already a problem in some areas at some times, and already detract from the experience of visiting our national parks.

Our major concern is the disconnect between this call for evidence-based planning and several of the other statements in the Key Directions Paper. This disconnect is also demonstrated by the reality of development¹ in our national parks.

Submission

The TNPA is a non-profit, non-government organisation which provides an independent voice on issues that affect Tasmania's national parks and other conservation reserves. The TNPA considers presentation and visitor management to be crucial aspects of the stewardship of reserved land and has a history of engaging in public debate on these issues. The TNPA's membership reflects a range of interests in relation to reserved land, including considerable expertise in the management of natural and cultural values.

Surveys of visitors to Tasmania consistently identify the opportunity to engage with wild nature as one of Tasmania's key attractions and as one of its key points of difference from other Australian destinations. The term “wilderness” has been synonymous with Tasmania since the 1970s and is included in the name *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area*. It is self-evident that the preservation of this wild character is fundamental to maintaining Tasmania's attractiveness as a destination yet tourism policy, including this paper, too often focuses on exploiting wild character while rarely acknowledging that this exploitation usually compromises its preservation.

This failure to appreciate that exploiting Tasmania's wild character simultaneously destroys it has been a major concern of the TNPA for many years.

¹ For example, the proposed cableway from the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre to Dove Lake. The rationale for this proposal is to cater for a substantial increase in visitor numbers yet many would consider that the number of visitors in the area around the northern end of Dove Lake at peak periods is already high enough to seriously detract from the opportunity to experience the natural environment. This extremely expensive and intrusive proposal is progressing in the absence of any research on the carrying capacity of the Dove Lake area.

It is also a major concern for many locals. The tourism industry may be able to survive without the active support of locals but it needs to avoid their active resentment of visitors. This is becoming increasingly apparent at our most heavily visited natural destinations: Freycinet, kunanyi/Mount Wellington and Cradle Mountain.

Increasing tourist numbers at any destination are typically associated with the following shift in the attitudes of locals; initially locals are welcoming and happy to show visitors their favourite places but once visitor numbers rise to the level where locals are displaced, the welcome turns to resentment and locals are displaced to less attractive areas or choose to visit out of season. The final stage of this shift occurs when so much additional infrastructure is constructed to cater for visitors that the place becomes almost unrecognisable to those familiar with how it used to be. The tourism industry needs to acknowledge that this shift is probably well under way and that research on it is long overdue.

Some **specific comments** on the Visitor Economy Key Directions Paper follow. Page references relate to *tasmanias-2030-visitor-economy-key-directions-paper.pdf*.

Page 15: *adventure and wild experiences should not come at the cost of luxury.*

It must be recognised that luxurious experiences are inherently neither particularly adventurous nor particularly wild but their provision in remote areas can have major impacts on those seeking a genuinely adventurous or wild experience in the vicinity.

Page 23: *The beauty of our landscape underpins the Tasmanian way of life. Our natural environment is finite and precious, core to our reputation and integral to our brand.*

The TNPA agrees; the unstated corollary is that it is imperative to protect the beauty of our landscape and our natural environment. Our landscape and natural environment will suffer “death by a thousand cuts” unless their protection is given higher priority.

Page 25: *Key Direction 2. We will proactively manage growth to protect and enhance Tasmania’s brand, environment and community values ... while visitor growth provides benefits, it also presents challenges.*

There are constraints to growth [including] the capacities of our natural areas ... to cater for larger numbers of visitors at one time. These present limits and thresholds that if exceeded can damage tourism’s relationship with Tasmanians, impact our environment and erode visitor experience and brand reputation. Investing in data and research about forecast visitor growth and visitation patterns ... will support planning and investment in future infrastructure, benefitting locals and visitors. An understanding of carrying capacity, cumulative impact, limits and thresholds will inform options to manage impacts and growth.

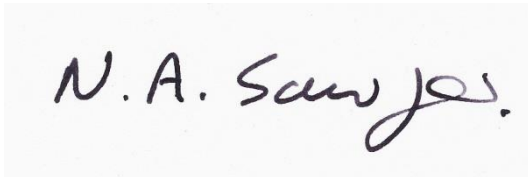
The TNPA advocates evidence-based planning but is extremely concerned that far too many projects are proceeding, or have already been completed, prior to the research which might have provided justification, or otherwise, for their implementation. Such projects have potentially locked in over-use which will ultimately detract from Tasmania’s attractiveness as a visitor destination. See also Summary above.

Page 39: *Tasmania’s protected areas are our destination differentiator. Our nature, landscapes and multi-day walks are a primary reason why visitors come to Tasmania. As the world increasingly recognises the intrinsic value of nature and the environment, scrutiny will grow on the type and scale of tourism activity in these areas.*

We will support continued investment ... prioritising ... delivery of master plan initiatives.

It must be acknowledged that the current "Master Plans" for Cradle Mountain and Freycinet particularly have been prepared with little or no consideration of the limits acknowledged in Key Direction 2. The implementation of these Master Plans should cease until the missing research on visitor experience has been undertaken. It should also be acknowledged that the construction of the Next Iconic Walk on the West Coast will have massive impacts on the wild character of the area. It too should be reconsidered.

The TNPA would welcome an opportunity to discuss this submission in person.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "N. A. Sawyer." with a period at the end.

Nicholas Sawyer
President, TNPA
21 June 2023

References:

<https://tnpa.org.au/cradle-mountain-master-plan/>

<https://tnpa.org.au/revised-freycinet-master-plan-2019/>

<https://tnpa.org.au/tyndall-range-next-iconic-walk-feasibility-study/>