



## What do people think about Sustainable Tourism in Tasmania?

Tasmania has experienced a recent decline in the numbers of visitors to some regional areas despite a small increase in overall visitor numbers. An option to stimulate development in the regions is to encourage sustainable tourism development. A recent trend in tourism has been the development of ecologically sustainable developments, like extended walks, accommodation and other attractions located within or adjacent to protected areas. It is thought that developments like these attract a high yielding visitor.

### Research Outcomes

- An understanding of stakeholders' attitudes towards sustainable tourism development in Tasmania's environmentally sensitive areas.
- Estimates of likely changes in visitation and expenditure in response to a range of development scenarios for sensitive areas.
- Scenarios of acceptable development for sustainable tourism in sensitive areas.
- A series of recommendations for acceptable tourism development to inform local and regional planning frameworks.

#### 1. Why did we do this study?

We wanted to know what types of tourism developments are socially acceptable to the people affected by tourism in Tasmania. We also wanted to know the extent to which sustainable tourism development might increase the rates of visitation.

Working closely with the federal Department of the Environment's Regional Sustainability Planning team, we studied [social attitudes to sustainable tourism in Tasmania](#) to support planning and decision making for new tourism projects in environmentally sensitive areas in Tasmania.

We focused on three sensitive area regions of Tasmania: the Tarkine, the Bay of Fires and Bathurst Harbour.

#### 2. What did we do?

We explored social attitudes by interviewing local residents, operators, regulators and members of tourism associated organisations, as well as domestic tourists to Tasmania. We used pictures of different types of tourism to prompt participants to express what they liked and didn't like about different scales of development and styles of development.

We employed a novel approach called Q sort that asks respondents to preferentially sort photograph's of different styles of development. The research involved 98 in-depth interviews and 137 surveys) and involved a mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

From the interviews and surveys, we statistically derived 'attitude clusters' that grouped stakeholders with similar attitudes towards tourism development in each of the case study regions. This provided a basis for statistical analysis of the results and an economic assessment of the likely impacts of various tourism developments in the case study regions.

### 3. How did we do it?

There is a lot of interest in the improved methods of data collection and analysis in attitudinal surveys. The innovative method we used is known as the Q sort method and was pioneered in New Zealand.

Participants rank their preferences using photos in a thought provoking and fun process — a departure from traditional survey methods.

The Q sort method provides a way of assessing subjective perceptions using factor analysis in an unorthodox way to detect patterns of perception. In so doing, the method renders subjectivity measurable.

We then used economic modelling to investigate the possible impact on the Tasmanian economy. Using preferred scenarios, the economic impact analysis was based on the characteristics of three statewide attitudinal clusters.

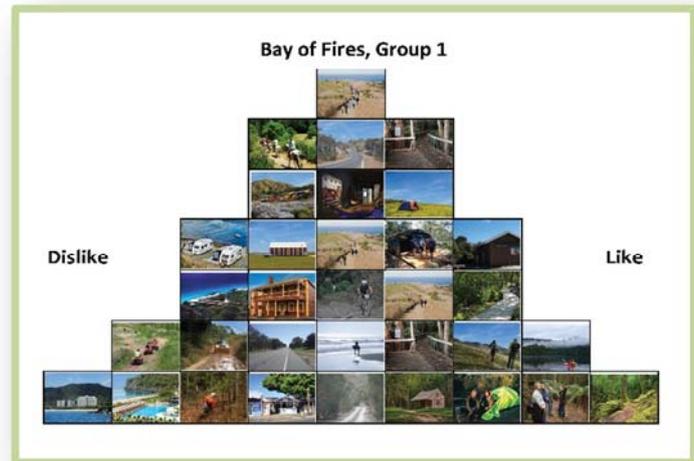


Photo arrangement for the Q sort activity

### 4. Our recommendations

Our recommendations fall into three categories: policy implications, tourism industry implications and research implications. The recommendations are outlined in the final report and we provide a snapshot below.

- Identifying attitudinal groups may prove useful for designing future tourism development policies and approval processes, especially to manage conflict.
- Considering regional differences in attitudes may be helpful in policy development
- Consulting broadly with a cross section of stakeholders may help manage conflict in tourism development applications.
- Streamlining approval processes for sustainable tourism development is likely to be supported by a range of stakeholder groups.
- There is a need for further research to explore why attitudes towards tourism development in Tasmania did not align with stakeholder groups.
- There is need to strengthen the tourist dataset to reveal whether the opinions of tourists in a particular case study region differ from those who visit other parts of Tasmania.
- There is a need for more data specific on the study areas (Bay of Fires, Tarkine and Boart Harbour) to better understand the numbers of visitors and their movement within areas.



## 5. What did the results tell us?

### The interviews

1. Preference for the level of development across all three regions was not aligned to particular stakeholder groups (that is, local residents, operators, regulators or members of community groups).
2. There is a lack of awareness of the range of tourist destinations in Tasmania, particularly by tourists. This suggests that further work needs to be done to understand cumulative development preferences when knowledge is low.
3. While stakeholders and tourists exhibited different preferences, there was a shared sense that some form of visitor access should be allowed in all three regions.

### The economic analysis

The similarity of the attitudes expressed towards sustainable tourism development across the three regions led to the development of three statewide tourism scenarios (*Environmental Engagers*, *Outdoor Multi-Users* and *Environmental Pragmatists*). *Environmental Engagers* preferred tourism where visitors are immersed in the natural environment, undertaking activities with minimal impacts; *Outdoor Multi-Users* preferred multi use, higher-impact tourism activities in natural areas (e.g. 4WD, ATV tracks); and *Environmental Pragmatists* wanted minimal impact accommodation and activities that promote and provide access to the case study regions.

In terms of cumulative tourism development, *Environmental Engagers* expressed a preference for differing levels of development across the three case study areas, based upon their recognition of different levels of development and specific values possessed by each of the case study areas. *Environmental Pragmatists* and *Outdoor Multi-Users* expressed preferences for the same type of tourism development for all three case study areas. But, the two scenarios

diverged in the type of tourism product they desired focusing on low impact, high yielding or high intensity activity (for example, four-wheel driving product respectively).

The economic analysis indicated that higher direct and indirect expenditure is likely to be made by *Environmental Pragmatist* and *Outdoor Multi-Users*, due to their desire for more value added tourism products like guided tours, use of motorised vehicles (quad bikes) and non-motorised activities (fishing).

We identified some potential advantages to the Tasmanian economy if the tourism market was to expand current tourism products to address all three attitude clusters. What this would mean is differentiated regional development with high wilderness preservation and limited access to some parts of the State, targeting *Environmental Engagers*. In addition, there is potential to target attitudes aligned with *Environmental Pragmatists*, who desire the same types of locations but are happy to see greater tourism product, such as accommodation on site, group tours with low impact activities (for example canoeing, fishing). Each statewide scenario is mutually exclusive on a specific site but can co-exist in a region. Therefore, there is the potential to enhance the economic impact of tourism on the State's economy through directly targeting regions and stakeholders aligned to the separate scenarios.

## 6. Who will use the results?

People interested in our study work in organisations that plan for tourism and want to understand social attitudes and stakeholder perceptions towards development. This includes Tourism Tasmania, the Tasmanian Government and local councils in the study areas. Specific areas in the Department of the Environment include Parks Australia, World Heritage Areas and Strategic Approvals.



7. *Where to from here?*

We will be discussing the results of this study and their potential application to evidence-based policy and decision making with the federal Department of the Environment, Tourism Tasmania, the Tasmanian Department of Economic Development and Break O’Day Council. We are preparing a paper on our method and findings to submit to a scientific journal for peer review and will present the findings to the [2015 Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education Conference](#) in February 2015.

8. *Who are the researchers?*

**Dr Anne Hardy** (University of Tasmania) is an expert in qualitative research into stakeholder attitudes into tourism development in sensitive areas. Dr Hardy is leading the study.

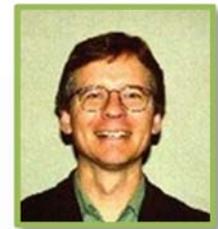


**Dr Penny Davidson** (Consultant and Charles Stuart University Adjunct Professor) is an expert in qualitative research into outdoor recreation and tourism, environmental behaviour and relationship to place.



**Dr Leonie Pearson**, University of Canberra, is an economist with expertise in quantifying residents’ attitudes towards development in National Parks on an individual and cumulative scale.

**Dr Lorne Kriwoken** (University of Tasmania) is an expert in protected area legislation, policy and management with tourism and development; cumulative impact assessment.



*Find out more*

Dr Anne Hardy

☎ 03 6226 7687

[Anne.Hardy@utas.edu.au](mailto:Anne.Hardy@utas.edu.au)

Dr Leonie Pearson

☎ 02 6201 5148

[Leonie.Pearson@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Leonie.Pearson@canberra.edu.au)

**Further reading about Q sort:**

Fairweather J & Rinne T (2012) Clarifying a basis for qualitative generalization using approaches that identify shared culture. *Qualitative Research*, August 2012 vol. 12 no. 4 473-485.

*About the Landscapes and Policy hub*

The Landscapes and Policy hub is one of five research hubs funded by the [National Environmental Research Program](#) (NERP) for four years (2011–14) to study biodiversity conservation.

We integrate ecology and social science to provide guidance for policymakers on planning and managing biodiversity at a regional scale. We develop tools, techniques and policy options to integrate biodiversity into regional-scale planning. The University of Tasmania hosts the hub.

[www.nerplandscapes.edu.au](http://www.nerplandscapes.edu.au)

