

# East Coast Alliance Annual General Meeting 29 September 2019

## Presentation by David Reed

Cambria Estate is huge – but at Sorell, on only a \$14m scale – it's already happened.

Have you heard of Orani? The lovely 160 acre fruit farm outside Sorell bought in 2016 by the Chinese and now with accommodation for up to 300 in low cost, shared (almost backpacking) facilities. It's built and it's there – mass tourism, not using the usual distribution systems, all to be filled by Chinese Nationals through their Chinese social media platform wechat. It reminds me of an army barracks on steroids.

### So, what might Tasmanian Tourism look like in 10 years' time?

#### **The Mercury, March 16 2030: Tourism Roundup**

*Three cruise ships arrived yesterday, taking the total numbers to 230 for the year so far, and Hobart was host to 15,000 day trippers in and around the foreshore. Luckily it was Saturday so the market had an absolute bonanza, with crowds thronging the waterfront.*

*Macquarie Point's craft market was also abuzz, and as the newly opened 20,000 seat AFL stadium was getting ready to host its first home game for the season for the Tasmanian Tigers AFL Team, all hotel rooms in Hobart were pretty much full. The two new Fragrance Group hotels were contacted and said their 600 rooms were 100% full.*

*Luckily, the buses and ferries from the Eastern Shore were all able to unload without incident, unlike last week when the third cruise ship was using tenders to get their passengers ashore and blocked the ferry terminal.*

*The twice-weekly arrival of our international connection from Guangzhou was on time and the four sky buses that brought them into town were slightly delayed by only 45 minutes.*

*All four shuttle buses to the Maria Island ferries and the light rail to the National Park were also full – all enjoyed a top day out.*

*Freycinet carpark overflowed by 07.30am and so the usual limit of 400 per hour to Wineglass Bay Beach was imposed. By lunchtime only 1,600 had walked onto the beach with no dramas – a better experience for all compared to last week when there were four helicopter evacuations before lunch.*

*In the south a nasty car accident on the road to Tahune Airwalk meant the 2,000 day visitors were unable to pass the scene until a full recovery team had arrived from Geeveston. There were delays of up to four hours to get back to Hobart.*

*Kingston Beach, Seven Mile Beach and Taroona Beach were again closed for swimming but TasWater are adamant they have the problems under control and expects to lift all the bans by this time next week.*

*The bushfire alert meant that all roads around Scottsdale were closed for a second day running. The NE areas have never before seen bushfires like these, and the East Coast was cut off from Scottsdale, Fingal and Campbell Town. Rain is not likely soon.*

**My son's diary from the same day (March 16 2030) reads like this: Saturday from Hell**

*9.00am*

*As you know Davey Street is closed to cars nowadays on Saturdays for the markets and cruise ships, so all cars are parked on the Domain. Through traffic is banned between 8.00am and 4.00pm. Daughter has to get to Kingston for basketball – bloody nightmare via West Hobart and the Domain.*

*Tried to get back home but the traffic was snarled. Ended up parking in South Hobart and walking past the gridlock to the footy – lucky for the corporate tickets. The cruise ships and the markets made for complete bedlam, no one knew where they were going. It was awful, people hot, angry and jostling everywhere, just like last time I went to town. Best to leave it all alone and go to Bicheno. It's 3.5 hours now by road and the traffic to get there is bloody awful – now nearly 600,000 visitors a year up there, unbelievable. Sometimes they reckon there are over 1,600 cars up and down in a day. No wonder there are traffic jams here and there – oh for the Swansea bypass. Opens next week. Save at least 30 minutes I reckon.*

*9.00pm*

*All the cruise ships have gone thank goodness, both the markets have packed up and now there's only the 20,000 stadium maniacs to deal with on the way home. Get a ferry back to Geilston Bay after the footy and will go and get the car tomorrow I reckon.*

In an Opinion piece in The Mercury late last year I asked, 'At what time in the future will Hobart cease inviting the world to come and visit? What will be the determining factors that will trigger actions from Hobartians when they realise that we are overcrowded and the Hobart way of life has been seriously eroded?'

*We need to have a discussion about value versus volume, and while we will continue to be the envy of every mainlander if not large parts of the world who want to live and share our lifestyle ... when does all the progress and growth actually start the inexorable diminution of Tasmania's essential brand values?'*

**Now, what are those brand values?**

I think they have been eroded by large scale – which Tasmania is not – large scale fish farming, large scale hotel developments, and land developments like Cambria, a large scale city university (who thought of that?), and large cruise ships etc.

Instead of trying to halt inevitable development, tourism should be used as a tool to create a better society for all Tasmanians. May I now quote from some work done by my colleague Sarah Lebsksi from the Launceston Campus of the University of Tasmania.

Destination management organisation (DMO), Wonderful Copenhagen, is unequivocal in its boldly titled tourism strategy, *The End of Tourism As We Know It*:

*Our new vision is not only a four year perspective: it is a vision that supports our development of the future destination beyond 2020 that we wish to co-create.*

*A future destination where human relations are the focal point, where the differentiation between destination and home of locals is one and the same. A destination, where locals and visitors not only co-exist, but interact around shared experiences of localhood.*

The concept of harnessing tourism for a higher purpose, to create better societies and flourishing communities, is becoming a more common theme in responsible destination management.

These strategies, which are all gaining substantial international attention, articulate some common characteristics:

- The power of tourism for positive transformation
- A genuine and active focus on sustainability across culture, community and environment
- The importance of social licence in destination development and management.

We balance economic drivers with questions like, 'What does this mean for our community? What does our community think about this? What does it mean environmentally? How can this particular action actually regenerate our environment, not just take from it? Culturally, how are we really staying true to our unique culture and DNA and not trying to be like someone else?

### **So, what can we do?**

We can't stop people coming, so I want to concentrate on not what we do when they come, but whom do we invite?

The government has many very useful levers in our tourism industry. It looks after roads and infrastructure, it has ships crossing Bass Strait every day, it manages the wonderful natural attractions we enjoy through Parks, it develops walks and funds regional tourism. It started Brand Tasmania earlier this year.

The government also has \$2.5m in the supply side of tourism, it pays for the accreditation scheme via supporting the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT), it heavily supports the Tasmanian Hotels Association, it funds Drysdale Hospitality School through TAFE. It supports festivals and events. It's the backer for Dark Mofo, for example, and the Bicheno Food and Wine Festival. Tourism is flowing through very many facets of government agencies. The biggest is Tourism Tasmania with a budget \$20.8m. In market spend this is big.

But do they, the government, know what's going on? Do they have a vision about what tourism should look like in 2030? Do they understand community concerns?

I ask – how can we change that and challenge the status quo. How can we influence the government about **value versus volume**, and talk about yield and regional dispersal?

Right now, Tasmania is being outgunned by the other Eastern States. In straight line growth rates, the growth in what is by far our biggest market - the mainland at 70% (of our visitors):

TAS	4.6%
SA	5%
NSW	8.3%
VIC	11.8%
QLD	13.3%

Tourism Tasmania is asleep at the wheel. Do they know what's going on? Do they have a vision about what tourism should look like in 2030? Do they understand community concerns?

### **How can we change their mindset and revamp their outlook?**

Now is the time for action – it's perfect – a pregnant pause in arrivals to the Island.

TICT and Tourism Tasmania are developing their new 10 to 20 year strategies, and they have employed on contract Anne Greentree to facilitate this work.

This project will outline what and how the future shape of the industry looks like. So we have two options to get heard, on either side of the discussions:

- 1) To lobby the Tourism Tasmania Board. I think that would be innovative and different. I'm not sure that has ever been done before and why not? They all get paid so they should be able to receive emails.
- 2) We should lobby TICT – through members, through RTO's (rights to information) and through their conferences and meetings.

Anyway, this is an activists' meeting, so how would I dare to say how to do it?!

I'll leave it to you.

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David Reed is a former Chair of East Coast Tourism, a former director of the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania and a long-term tourism industry consultant. He now manages Cod Rock Point apartments at Bicheno and is President of the Bicheno Food and Wine Festival.