



# Talking Point: How quickly can we mess things up?

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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?

That way of life has been variously described as having no traffic jams (wherever you live it's only minutes to get to work), easy access to catching a flathead, walking on deserted beaches, ambling around the Hobart waterfront, wonderful national parks at our doorstep, seeing our hospital as the biggest building around and knowing people in the street when you're out and about.

These in fact are our very own brand attributes.

Looking at TasPorts' new plan, surely 10,000 cruise ship visitors on one day walking around Hobart is far too many? Should we not have a conversation about 5000?

How many people is deemed the acceptable limit to visit Wineglass Bay beach in a day? Surely if 4000 turned up we would be horrified — but that's on the cards if we are not careful about future planning and setting a limit.

And as for flathead — the salmon industry is de-stocking Macquarie Harbour, and wants to go to Storm Bay (or King Island — but King Islanders will most likely stop that).

Plotting a course through that many salmon pens in Storm Bay will make it ridiculous for the Sydney-Hobart — it may have to become the Sydney-Launceston.

Most recreational yachties and fishermen are not at all happy with the status quo already in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, suggesting higher than previous levels of nutrient and sludge around the bottom and certainly many fewer elusive flathead. So — even more salmon farms? What's the limit?

So what is the city limit on skyscrapers going to be? Are we going to bend away from and compromise the 18m height ceiling contained within the 1996 Sullivans Cove Planning scheme to what — about 35m — or 40m? The council is currently seeking our inputs on a new plan — we should all be very vocal.

How many wide-bodied aircraft do we want arriving directly on a daily basis onto the recently extended Hobart runway? Is seeking out and assisting an international carrier from Asia a great investment decision to commence a service with one arrival a week? What about four a day? So, in 10 years that theoretically could be 1600 people per day from one source market — madness!

The University of Tasmania is altering the face of housing in and around Hobart — and undoubtedly distorting the market in the process. They have had built hundreds of low-rent apartments in Hobart alone, so students promptly vacated their rental houses around the Sandy Bay Campus. Those owners turned to the sharing economy and low-cost housing rental stock disappeared. It will happen again — unintentional maybe but nevertheless market distortion. And by the way — who actually reckons that the university campus needs to relocate completely to the city from Sandy Bay? And how and when did we, the citizens of Hobart, get a say in that?

The Cambria development proposal outside Swansea is for 900 dwellings/strata/units/ rooms. Do we really want to build another town on the East Coast right next door to an existing one? Is that good for Tasmania?

These, and many others like them are issues that are all to do with the brand of Tasmania, and how it is subtly or otherwise being changed (almost surreptitiously) in ways that individually and then collectively are to Tasmania's detriment.

Tasmania is a wonderful place to live and raise a family — but how quickly can we stuff it all up? Certainly within 10 years.

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 (and, yes, those in the property market will be hard to wean off the capital growth that that envy brings), when does all the progress and growth actually start the inexorable diminution of Tasmania's essential brand values?

So what can we do?

Maybe Brand Tasmania (the organisation) can craft a careful re-think as to its charter and key success criteria. That is potentially the organisation that can harness the data, set the vision and create awareness of our brand values for all leaders within government and industry to benchmark and measure their decisions and actions by.

What needs to occur is that every difficult decision facing government, whether it be cruise ship numbers, salmon farms, high-rise, large East Coast developments, visitor numbers, etc, is made utilising the very best data and policy formulation skills as a given – but ultimately, before being implemented must pass a relatively simple test: “Does this policy/decision protect, preserve and ideally add value to Tasmania’s core Brand Values?”

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