

# Meeting Notes

Riverside, Tuesday 22 June 2021  
1pm to 4pm



## Discussion points:

- **Tourism:** Season is longer, industry is more capable of operating through the uncertainty, but the stress is still huge.
- **Housing:** Challenge to make housing available, accessible and affordable.
- **Data for decision making:** What to do when online engagement numbers drop.
- **Strategies:** Who works to an economic development or tourism plan?

Attendees	
Bruce Williams [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Meander Valley Council	Economic Development Adviser
Claire Campbell [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], City of Launceston	Tourism & Events Officer
Damien Blackwell [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], West Tamar Council	Tourism Development Officer
Fiona Ranson [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], City of Launceston	Place and Heritage Officer
Helen Thomas [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], King Island	Growth & Strategy Manager
Iris Goetzki [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Hobart City Council	Manager Activation Programs and Tourism
Katrena Stephenson [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Kingborough Council	Director Environment, Development and Community
Kevin Turner [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], RDA Tasmania	Regional Development Coordinator
Lucy Knott [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Hobart City Council	Senior Advisor Economic Development
Michele Gibbins [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], West Tamar Council	Manager Community
Michelle Gledhill [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Huon Valley Council	Manager Economic Development
Mike Brindley [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], RDA Tasmania	Regional Development Coordinator
Sammi Gowthorp [ <a href="#">Email</a> ], Flinders Island Council	Community Development and Council Engagement Officer

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## 1. Tourism discussion, led by Damien Blackwell

It is time to think strategically because the visitor economy has shifted. The ways people take holidays has changed and operators, while rising to the challenge, are dealing with the stress of unexpected changes.

How is the visitor economy faring in different parts of Tasmania? How do we help the industry come out winners?

### Discussion points:

- **Strategic planning:** It is time to think strategically as we need to plan for a different visitor economy. The four new Destination Management Plans should help.
- **Mental health;** supporting and promoting mental health services continues to be important.
- **Holiday at Home:** genuine interest in discovering accommodation and attractions both close to home and in other areas. Tourism Tasmania's '[Make Yourself at Home](#)' work has helped.
- **Check In Tas QR Codes;** councils having to make lots of signs for all their different locations.
- **Local employment:** unemployment numbers balanced, probably shifting from tourism to health.
- **Private rentals:** [Air DNA](#) has tracked the drop in availability of Air BNB was matched by a rise in rental properties. Air BNB is starting to re-emerge.
- **Government incentives:** [Recovery for Regional Tourism](#) program is starting to take shape (NB: \$13.5 million from the Australian Government, 4 projects approved = Agri-Tourism business and product development, Business Events Famil Program, Leisure Famils, Winter Program)
- **Occupation rates:** Accommodation businesses have reported that occupancy is strong, close to 80% in Autumn.
- **Extended season:** State-wide more people are holidaying longer into winter. Making the season longer has been a long-term industry objective.
- **Travel / visitor centres:** Visitor numbers and bookings returning to strength.
- **Salamanca market;** Tasmania's most visited attraction, not all stallholders returned but those who have are reporting that trade is strong. While numbers of people are down the yield from them is good.
- **Kingston:** Not somewhere tourists stop but Kingborough Council are hoping that placemaking and redevelopments informed by [Kingston Place Strategy 2020-2050](#) will make it a more attractive place to visit.
- **Bruny Island Visitor Education Project:** Kingborough Council have been working with the Bruny DAP (and Alex Heroys) on the Bruny Island Visitor Education Project. [For the People](#) undertook consultation and developed a strategy identifying key project. Bruny Tourism (via Melinda Anderson) will be taking on delivery of the projects.
- **Lessons from restrictions:** Restrictions have reduced income and increased operating costs, but as a silver lining in some instances limits, or a sense of exclusivity, drive demand: Tours of Hastings Caves are capped at 8 people, significantly reducing numbers but forward bookings are strong.
- **Tahune Adventures:** after bushfires and Covid, Tahune are now finding some stability with weekend numbers strong, weekdays still down.

- **Flinders Island:** Hobart to Flinders direct flights brought 60 new visitors a week, sailings from Bridport could bring 12 self-touring vehicles a time, for the first time Flinders Island gained a sense of being a tourism destination rather than a visiting-friends-and-relatives destination.
  - Issues for Flinders; food venues struggled to match demand, free campers disrespected the environment.
- **Regenerative Tourism:** This is the direction Flinders Island are exploring. [\\$300,000 was committed](#) by the Tasmanian Liberal party in this year's election to create a Regenerative Tourism Plan; "The Plan will preserve what makes Flinders Island special, while ensuring the local economy receives the benefits of a booming visitor economy". The work will be undertaken by [Dianne Dredge and Sarah Lebski](#). It is informed by the work of [Anna Pollock](#).
- **King Island :** King Island's visitor economy is more tied to Victoria than Tasmania, 80% visitors are normally from Melbourne.
  - The direct Hobart flights are low in numbers but do mean Tasmanian visitors are more visible than before.
  - Car hire is the canary in the mine, on King Island the full fleet of 95 vehicles are back being utilised. The support programs (e.g. [Business Vehicle Registration Relief](#)) have helped.
  - Tourism Tasmania held their board meeting on King Island which allowed the council and stakeholders to raise their awareness of issues, things that might not be obvious like the cost of milk (\$8 for 2 litres) or Department of Health's purchase of the cabin park taking short-term rentals off the market.
  - Golf tourism: Cape Wickham has bounced back; pre-Covid 6,500 rounds were played a year, it is now at 8,000 rounds, although they are behind their target of 9,500 rounds per year.
- **Events tourism**
  - Cultural and sport events: MONA FOMA in January 2021 was the first festival post-lockdown and demonstrated that people still want to attend festivals. The umbrella model (different events in different places) helps to manage Covid risk.
  - Business events: several of us were going to attend the Place Branding conference in Hobart which cancelled because of Victorian's travel restrictions, demonstrating the vulnerability of the sector.
- **Launceston:**
  - Launceston's place brand is an initiative that will help them and the community use Launceston as a brand to help promote their qualities and values. The City of Launceston have worked with [Destination Think](#) to understand the 'Place DNA' and [For The People](#) to develop creative content that communicates the brand.
  - City of Launceston have engaged [Inhabit Place](#) to research the uses of public space so they have data to help inform their place-making projects.

## 2. Round table

- **Flinders Island housing conundrum:** How do you build houses when there are no houses to house the builders? How do you make housing affordable with the extra costs of building in remote areas, the high demand for housing and the shortage of developable sites? Flinders Island are taking a whole-of-community approach to find solutions.
- **Kingborough housing and commuters:** 84% working population commute and 2,000 new dwellings will be built at Kingston in five years, potentially furthering this pattern. The Kingston Place Strategy is about changing from a commuter town to one where people can live and work.
- **Commercial Fishing:** Crayfish went from \$120/kilo to \$45/kilo. Commercial operators were barely breaking even and there were fears in the community that they were going to lose this industry.
- **Question = Who has a mature economic development or tourism strategy at their council?**
  - Huon Valley Council are unifying their tourism and economic development strategy into their next Council Strategic Plan.
  - King Island fit economic development into their Strategic Plan, but they did create a [COVID Recovery and Economic Recovery Plan](#).
  - Hobart has the [Covid-19 Economic Response and Recovery Framework and Action Plan 2020–22](#)
  - The newest are from [Glenorchy](#) and [Kentish](#) who both released theirs in 2020.
  - Clarence and Launceston are working on new ones.
  - New [web page](#) for the Local Government Economic Development Network has links to all these plans.
- **Spendmapp:** Kingborough Council have been using [Spendmapp](#) data and combining with Huon Valley Council to understand expenditure flows between the two municipalities. King Island have also worked with Spendmapp to understand expenditure in their local economy.
- **Community Engagement:** [Our Say](#) indicated online engagement is becoming less popular, instead recommending councils use a combination of face-to-face and artificial intelligence tools to monitor sentiment. As a result, Kingborough Council are trialling [Zen City](#) to monitor what is being said online about Kingborough.
- **Placemaking and Activation:** Hobart have an activation framework that helps people and businesses use public spaces and infrastructure for their events.

## 3. For the Network

- **New web page:** RDA Tasmania will launch a mini-site for the network that includes information on network members and meetings as well as resources such as examples of economic development plans and strategies: <https://www.rdatasmania.org.au/local-government-economic-development-network/>
- **Next meeting:**
  - Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 1pm at Kentish Council in Sheffield.
  - Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/local-government-economic-development-network-tickets-159582701155>