

# Hobart at the crossroads in tourism debate

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**Kerry Johnstone** says Tasmania's capital must learn lessons from other small cities

WHAT do large cities like Rome or small cities like Bergen in Norway or places like La Boca in Buenos Aires have in common that keep tourists returning?

It is the preservation of culture, history, architecture, treasures, the things which make those places unique.

Green spaces and ease of movement. Wilderness and wildlife.

Tourism is a fickle business and there is no guarantee it will last unless the uniqueness is preserved.

One area of Hobart's uniqueness is its geography, compressed as it is between mountain and river requires special consideration with regard to development. This causes difficulty, with the main north-south artery separating the cove from the city, our recreation sites and sacred sites.

We as a city and state must decide immediately what sort of tourism we want. Is it all-out, open slather raking in the dollars, another crowded place, another lot of photographs taken somewhere, or something more memorable, more sophisticated, offering an interesting cultural and scenic experience.

Tourists search for difference, the unfamiliar, otherwise why travel?

The logistics of getting to places is not easy therefore people want experiences that will broaden their minds and they will remember with pleasure.

To achieve this we must limit the number of tourists at any one time in any one place. We still have to live and go about our daily business here.

There is a period in our history when cultural assets are too new to be old and too old to be new and therefore lack respect. This is a dangerous time when we can lose important structures which will in future be seen as valuable. There is a sense that many modern buildings are temporary, that at some time in the future they will be demolished for something new unless architecturally pleasing and well designed.

Away from the waterfront areas Hobart is not a particularly attractive city. Many nice features are in poor repair or dirty.

Artworks are few and far between. Important works like the George Davis mosaic on the Conservatorium of Music building are at risk. This is a

particularly pleasing work to my eye, and would be an enormous loss to Hobart and show a lack of respect to one of our foremost artists if it was lost.

Large cement walls on new buildings should have art works on them, trompe l'oeil for example.

Architecture, modern spectacular low-rise architecture, artwork in its own right rather than high-rise towering architecture or buildings made of cement slabs glued together.

Hobart has and needs to keep developing its own uniqueness because this is what will keep tourism alive.

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The new hotel at Macquarie Wharf and the improvement in pedestrian areas at the bottom of Murray St and around Princes Wharf No. 1 are examples of what we should be doing and we could even do better — careful planning of Macquarie Point so as not to crowd it and keep open space.

How many tourists do we want?

The more accommodation the more we can have, but can we fit them into our city without great inconvenience?

Many tourists visit my local supermarket, stand around in the aisles looking at the produce but not buying, impeding genuine shoppers.

The most disappointing event for me recently was missing the Van Gogh exhibition in Melbourne. Having purchased tickets and flown to Melbourne, we were unable to see it because buses of tourists had crowded out the gallery. The same applies to our national parks and wild places. If our lifestyle has to change too much to accommodate tourists in their masses it will be hard to bear.

**Kerry Johnstone studied at the Centre for the Arts in Hobart. She has a keen interest in architecture and has travelled extensively.**