

TASSIE
2022

tassal

SUPPORTED BY



PARTNERED BY



Let's develop to preserve best

If you want to preserve the aspects of Tasmania that make it special then allowing development is a must, say tourism leaders. **SIMEON**

THOMAS-WILSON reports

THE best way to conserve Tasmania's special values, heritage and wilderness is by allowing sensible development — tourism and development leaders argue.

And they say Tasmania needs to ensure its character is not a victim of the need to stimulate investment.

To do this, they argue, the Parks and Wildlife Service must be adequately funded and resourced after years of neglect, and a state architect position must be re-created — or a committee created to decide whether new proposals are in line with the values of the state.

With its low property prices compared with the rest of the nation — and the State Government's decision to open up parts of national parks, reserves and crown land for "sensitive and appropriate" tourism — more and more local, interstate and international developers are looking to splash their cash in Tasmania.

The increased interest brings a lot of money, but is starting to attract an increasing amount of community concern and opposition to the proposals.

Among the developments that are encountering increased community opposition include:

THE Fragrance Group's two proposed skyscrapers in Hobart.

THE much-debated Mt Wellington Cable Car.

THE Kangaroo Bay hospitality and training school.

A clifftop resort at Table Cape.

EXTENDING a walking track through the state's remote South-West.

HUTS on the South Coast Track.

A woodchip export processing facility in the Huon Valley.

HELICOPTER flights around Cradle Mountain, Freycinet and Tasman Island.

On top of that is debates about new uses for heritage-listed buildings such as the Treasury Building in Hobart and the public buildings in Launceston's St John Street, and whether the CSIRO building and University of Tasmania's Hunter St campus could be better used.

The key reasons usually given for opposing such developments include that they are not in line with the proposed area, would take away from Tasmanian "values" and would damage Tasmania's brand, heritage and wilderness.

It seems hard to see develop-

ment and conversation co-existing.

But those who love Tasmania say that not only can this happen, but it must happen for the state to be thriving in four years.

Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania chief executive Luke Martin argues that tourism enhances conservation.

"If we get tourists into these areas and they see them, they appreciate the place and want to preserve it," he said.

"More of these award-winning small-scale tourism projects completed by 2022 will help.

"We have some of the best operators in the world who really care about heritage and the environment.

"But we need to have a serious conversation about the funding of Parks and Wildlife and resourcing.

"The funding and resourcing of Parks and Wildlife has been a pimple on the backside for Tasmania. It needs to be addressed."

General manager of the world-renowned Saffire Freycinet resort Justin King has seen what can hap-

We are at risk of destroying the cultural values of the place if we don't balance this [development and conservation] right

architect **ROBERT MORRIS-NUNN**

pen when conservation and development intertwine.

As part of its high-end offering, Saffire has developed "signature experiences" that capitalise on Freycinet's stunning natural environment without detracting from it, Mr King said

"At the high end of the market, guests want to have a positive impact," he said. "They see the beauty of the area and they want to ensure that is protected.

"I think it's a great way Tasmania can move forward."

While award-winning local architect Robert Morris-Nunn's Kangaroo Bay project on Hobart's Eastern Shore has attracted opposition from some locals, he consistently champions "sensible" development of Tasmania's heritage and wilderness areas.

He said striking the balance between development and conservation was "absolutely critical" for Tasmania.

"I think it has to be, I think if we don't construct a framework for development for what I would call the spirit of the place we risk going down the wrong path," he said.

"There has to be a mechanism that looks at the proposed development and tests whether they are in the spirit of the place.

"It wouldn't just be management plans for parks, it would be a

statewide approach. You would have people like Richard Flanagan on this committee for example — people that have expressed some real vision about what this island should be.

"We are at risk of destroying the cultural values of the place if we don't balance this [development and conservation] right.

"Look at the middle of Paris.

They have maintained the charm of the area with their developments. They don't allow massive buildings in there. That's what we need to follow."

As well as a committee to decide whether developments were in line with the "spirit" of a place, Professor Morris-Nunn said the Heritage Council needed to be strengthened.

Council member and architect specialising in the re-use of historic buildings, Genevieve Lilley, said a strategic approach was required for Tasmania to conserve and make the most of its heritage buildings.

"In other places it is perfectly normal to do modern development in heritage places," she said.

"And that is what makes Tasmania unique. A lot of our buildings have not been touched for 80 to 100 years. In Sydney, the average life of a bathroom now is three years.

"It's very important that people be less afraid of the process around heritage, because that is how we are going to maintain these fantastic buildings.

"Look at the Agrarian Kitchen in Willow Court, look at Stillwater

in Launceston, that kind of stuff sets Tasmania apart."

Ms Lilley said with opposition to developments rising in Tasmania, it was vital that a state architect be re-established. The role was scrapped when the Liberal Party took government in 2014.

"I think it's absolutely critical that the state has a state architect," she said. "People are getting quite

militant about [developments]. It's really important that there is someone who is the champion of this change in Tasmania and can ensure it is done in the right way. Also advising from a strategic level, for example on Macquarie Point.

"There has been a lot about height when it comes to development in Tasmania, but that is one of 10 or 20 issues that will shape us."

WHAT THE READERS SAID

ENVIRONMENTAL issues loomed large for *Mercury* readers responding to our online 2022 survey.

More than 55 per cent of those responding rated greater protection of the natural environment as "very important".

A statewide planning scheme was nominated as the second most important environmental priority – followed by a strategic planning summit between conservationists and developers.

Here is a selection of the responses:

"I do not want to see big development in national parks."

"Mass tourism endangers both the built and natural environment and destroys the very things people want to see."

"Focus on areas of agreement, dialogue areas of difference."

"Mission statement that our built and natural environment and its protection and sustainability lies at the heart of our 'clean green image' and that all development should support this."

"We have to lose the 'Slobart' stigma and the idea we're anti-everything."



JOIN THE DEBATE

themercury.com.au

"Too much emphasis on conservation. If the rest of Australia wasn't proving us up, we'd be starving. I'm embarrassed by our willingness to hold our hands out for productive citizens' crumbs."

"Recognising the environment comes first before development."

"Understand what are Tasmania's points of difference, natural environment and heritage, and leverage/protect these."

"Keep the developers out of the national parks. I don't want to pay heaps of money the moment I set foot in a national park and all I can see are buildings that look like crap!"

"No private infrastructure inside national parks."

"Protection of natural waterways from fishery development, such as those in King Island under threat."

"Restrict fish farming to land based and keep our oceans clean."

"No logging in old-growth forests."

"Recognise that visitors love Tassie as it is ... not too much development please."

SEE THE FULL SURVEY RESPONSES at themercury.com.au