

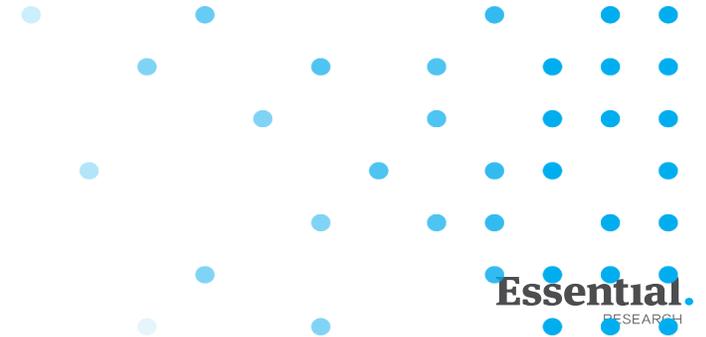
The Australia Institute

Lake Malbena campaign
- A qualitative study

PLEASE NOTE:

Given the small number of participants involved, these findings should be taken as indicative insights into the addressed research topics, not as a definitive picture of views of the broader Tasmanian community.

Key Findings



Key Findings

- While environmental issues and protection were not top of mind for most, participants in both focus groups showed a sense of pride and a connection to Tasmania's wilderness values when asked about it.
- They thought that the increasing influx of tourists into Tasmania brought some benefits for the economy as a whole, but they also mentioned some concerns about how Tasmania would manage this rapid growth long-term in a sustainable way.
- Only a few participants in each focus group had heard about the proposed developments in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and most did not know details.
- After reviewing information about the proposed developments in the narratives, most participants opposed the project. The arguments that resonated the most were that, once the TWWHA is opened up for commercial development, the wilderness character was lost forever. They strongly opposed restricting public access to the TWWHA and thought that investment was much more needed in other areas of the state that were already developed
- However, some participants said that they could support sensible and strictly regulated developments in the area if this would create jobs for Tasmanians and make the area accessible for people who could otherwise not enjoy these natural treasures

Current issues for Tasmanians

Cost of living, employment, the public health system and, to a lesser degree the environment, were top of mind issues for Tasmanians in these groups

COST OF LIVING

- Housing affordability
- Electricity prices
- Cost of high quality products

“*My son and his wife want to buy. They both work but they can't find anything affordable in Launceston.*”

HEALTH

- Long waiting lists / availability of hospitals, doctors, specialists

“*When my son had the brain hemorrhage, I had to drive 2 hours to get him help.*”

groups



ECONOMY

- Unemployment
- Struggle of small businesses

“*It took me two years to find a job. I was classed as unemployable because I spent 19 years raising my children.*”

ENVIRONMENT

- Waste / rubbish / recycling
- Climate change / extreme weather & bushfires

“*Dry lightning strikes were unheard of in Tasmania until about six years ago.*”

Overall, the participants expressed low or no satisfaction with the performance of the current Liberal State Government

- The participants named examples for promises the Liberal Government had made and failed to deliver on, such as the Royal Hobart Hospital rebuild, improving social security systems, addressing poverty and crime, etc.
- There was a general sense of disconnection between the goals and activities of the Government and what participants considered to be priority issues
- They therefore perceived the Government as self-centred and self-placating

- When asked about projects the Government is focussing on at the moment participants mentioned the following:
 - Big businesses & economy
 - Tourism sector
 - Sports industry
 - Affordable housing program
 - Establishment of a new prison in Hobart

None of the participants mentioned the Lake Malbena project at this stage

“

Our State Government has always looked at the short-term bang for buck. That is just their way of looking at the world.

“

I would say education and health are probably the main things for many people. These issues don't seem to rank very high on the Governments agenda.

Participants described a downwards trend of the Tasmanian economy, with the tourism sector being one of the only exceptions

“ They come here because we have it all - the mountains, the beaches, the bush.



“ A while back we had some good, powerful government campaigns for our tourism sector.

“ The number of Chinese tourists has skyrocketed in the last 5 years.

“ It seems like all the offers and hotels are becoming more and more focused on the wealthy. Higher quality, higher prices...

- Participants described tourism as the strongest growing industry sector in Tasmania.
- People in these two focus groups said tourists predominantly came to Tasmania for its natural beauty and cultural events and attractions such as Wooden Boat Festival, Dark Mofo, MONA.
- Some also in part attributed the growth of the Tasmanian tourism industry to successful government campaigns. Participants specifically mentioned the increasing influx of Asian (especially Chinese) tourists into Tasmania over the past five years.
- They also mentioned a general trend towards more high-end, luxury tourism offers and operators being active in Tasmania.

While most thought a growth in tourism would benefit Tasmania generally, some participants also observed some downsides of growing visitor numbers

“ Tourism benefits the economy. Brings people and money into the state.

“ Lots of industries benefit from our green, clean brand. Tasmania is becoming a real foodie destination too.

“ It's the catch 22, isn't it? We need the money and the economy boost, but at the same time, if we're wrecking what they're coming to see and then eventually we're not going to have it anymore, then there go the tourists too...

“ House prices are soaring, so people who don't have a house yet would not be benefitting.

+ In general, participants saw **cross-benefits from the success of tourism** in Tasmania **for other industries**, such as hospitality, cultural organisations and events and the food and wine industry.

However, only a few people in these two focus groups thought they were personally benefitting from this uptake.

– Some also **mentioned drawbacks** that eventuated from the growing influx of tourists, especially during summer, e.g.:

- Rising number of visitors in National Parks and beaches
- Negative effects on nature & wildlife
- Rising house prices and cost of living more generally
- Rising prices in restaurants, hotels, etc.

Wilderness & the TWWHA

Participants in these two groups considered Tasmania's wilderness as a core component of the state's identity

“ We are incredibly lucky to have these wildland areas. With everything going on like the Amazon fires. Very, very lucky and it brings the tourists too.

“ I would say about 55% of Tasmania is classified as 'wilderness'. That's areas that aren't open for development.

“ I think the appeal of Tasmania is that it is like Australia was 20 or 30 years ago. The landscape, the wildlife.

“ Lots of younger people come here now for this outdoor lifestyle. They want that experience of camping and kayaking rather than going to nightclubs.



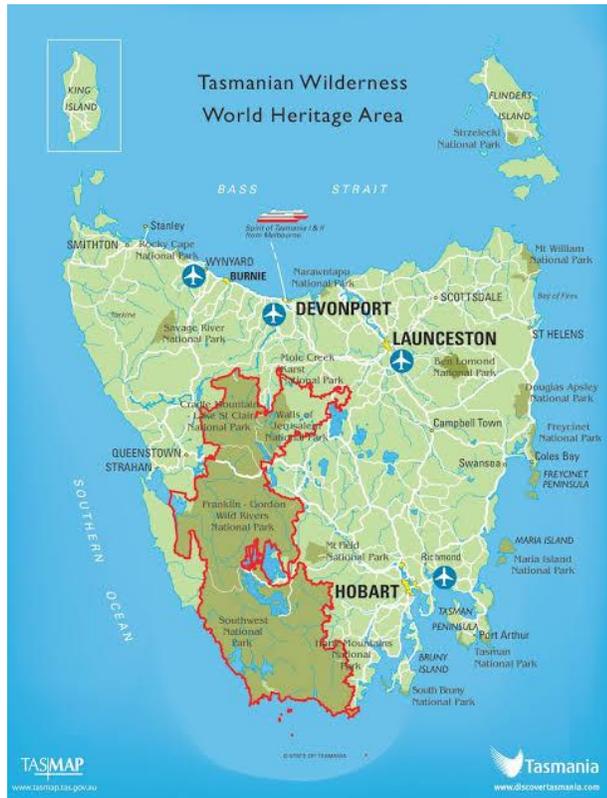
“ Our wilderness is almost our identity attachment.

“ Wilderness means untouched, unchanged landscape.

“ Our wilderness is what makes Tasmania special. That's our brand and why people come here.

“ Part of Tasmania is that chilled, laid-back mentality. The peace and quiet combined with our slow-paced lifestyle.

The TWWHA was appreciated for personal use as well as for its rarity on a national and global scale



- All participants knew of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and were aware that it was publicly accessible
- Most participants in these two focus groups had visited the TWWHA at some point
- They considered the TWWHA a special and highly valuable asset of Tasmania, because of its well conserved wilderness values and the rarity of such areas on a national and global scale

“Places like Tassie are becoming fewer and fewer and far in between.”

- Participants in these two focus groups said the TWWHA was under threat from industries, such as logging and mining and population growth in general

“Throughout Tasmanian history there has always been this dichotomy between creating new jobs and preserving our nature.”