

Project Manager

TWWHA Tourism Master Plan Project.

Please accept my submission to the Draft Tourism Management Plan.

Having waded through the Draft Tourism Management Plan and related documents, I can see no reason to change my mind on preventing the commercialisation, and therefore the degradation, of our wilderness heritage.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has come as a stark and timely reminder that the recent surge in global tourism, and the economic dependence it spawns, is an ephemeral thing. As we have learned: One day the State is buzzing with visitors, the next it's all quiet, except for the dismayed cries of businesses that have fed off Tasmania as the latest "must see" destination.

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, along with other national parks, has existed, unchanged, despite the health crisis threatening Mankind. It stands as a sentinel reminder of the natural world, and a mirror to the devastating effects human development has had on this planet.

Once it is compromised, we lose "wilderness" forever.

There is adequate opportunity for visitors to view much of our stunning natural landscape from the periphery of national parks and reserves. The necessary infrastructure to cater to these tourists is in place to extract maximum dollar value from them. Some of this could be improved or augmented, and I have no argument with that.

But we do not need any civilising development inside the TWWHA. The majority of people are only equipped to stare inwards to these wild areas, rather than traverse them. But I'm sure they are imbued with the wonder and power of what is beyond their physical reach.

Others can and do enter these areas – some further than others – to find a connection between man and his environment. We have guides who can assist to make this a unique and safe experience for visitors.

And we know that on a global basis, these untouched areas are vital to the health of the earth. It may not be too long before there will be an economic benefit in merely protecting these places for the good of the planet.

It appears that the world will be a different place once we overcome the current pandemic. The mass transit of intercontinental visitors is very likely to become part of the historical record. It presents a unique opportunity to reset our tourism experience – to steer away from a volume-based market, and position ourselves as a high-end destination. High-end doesn't necessarily mean "big dollar" ventures, but will mean all those coming here will respect the sanctity of undeveloped wilderness. Any incursion into this area with accommodation developments and their attendant helipads, boat cruises, power generation units, signage and noise completely destroys the sense and definition of wilderness – which is the sell-point for Tasmania's brand in the first place.

I note that the IUCN /ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission in 2015 was concerned that “it would indeed be alarming to use demand as the dominating criterion in tourism planning in a mixed World Heritage property.”

It also expressed the view that “many stakeholders wonder about the exact relationship between the ongoing Draft Management Plan process, the EOI and PARKS 21. EOI projects, it was argued, could result in negative impacts on both natural and cultural heritage.”

The negative reaction to the Lake Malbena proposal surely attests to the unease in the Tasmanian public, many of whom believe the changes to the Management Plan are being made to fit a Government-driven commercial imperative, from which the public input is largely excluded.

It appears to me that under this new management plan, commercialism trumps Outstanding Universal Values. And that doesn't seem consistent with world heritage principles.

Do not let the TWWHA become another plastic tourist park.

Greg Pullen