



Legislative Council

MEDIA RELEASE

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TOURISM REPORT CALLS FOR MAJOR CHANGES

The separation of Tourism Tasmania from the public service bureaucracy, the re-establishment of direct flights between Tasmania and New Zealand and the development of new icon attractions such as a tourist railway between Devonport and Wynyard are among 31 recommendations in a Legislative Council Report on tourism released today.

The Legislative Council Select Committee on Tourism in Tasmania formally presented its Report to the Council President in Launceston today after more than 14 months of gathering evidence from around Tasmania, mainland Australia and New Zealand.

Committee Chair, Launceston MLC Don Wing, said evidence presented to the Members overwhelmingly endorsed the State's tourism industry as a key economic driver for the future, especially as traditional industries underwent significant change and downsizing.

"Tourism continues to go through a fairly tough time itself, mainly as a result of the high Australian dollar and very cheap international airfares, but it has a very bright future if we, as a State, can grasp the many opportunities for growth," Mr Wing said.

"While the State Government and the local tourism industry have major roles to play in aggressively pursuing these opportunities, it was clear to the Committee that real success depended on all Tasmanians recognising the economic value of tourism and working together in welcoming and assisting every visitor to our wonderful State.

"One of the most important steps that the Government can take is to remove Tourism Tasmania from the restrictions and inhibitions created by its current position within the State bureaucracy so it can operate solely and independently as a specialist tourist marketing business," he said.

"This will not only free up funds to increase our marketing effort, but it will also allow Tourism Tasmania to respond more quickly to changing trends and situations within tourism nationally and globally."

Mr Wing said there was also a need for Tasmania to develop new icon attractions to give visitors more reasons to come to the State.

"A number of witnesses suggested the development of a tourist railway between Devonport and Wynyard, using the very special resources of the Don River Railway and the Committee strongly supports the idea after having spent several days in the North-West," he said.

“The Committee also believes there is great tourism potential in an appropriately designed and located cable car on Mt Wellington, as well the Three Capes Track being developed on the Tasman Peninsula.”

Mr Wing said Tasmania was undoubtedly a wonderful tourist destination and it had some outstanding tourism operations, large and small, but sections of the industry needed to improve their performance to ensure they don't miss any of the available opportunities.

“A key area is greater industry acceptance and use of technology by embracing online marketing, web-based booking facilities, social media and by using the internet to develop new niche markets, especially in nature-based and adventure tourism,” he said.

“Every industry player must also be committed to the very highest standard of customer service, whether they are a large accommodation chain, a small boutique B&B, a one-person tourist venture or one of our many food and beverage operations catering to visitors.

“In addition, this commitment to high quality service must be embraced by every other business that depends indirectly on tourism, such as taxis, petrol stations, corner stores, news agencies and hairdressers.”

Mr Wing said another significant recommendation in the Report was the re-establishment of the direct air links between Tasmania and New Zealand that operated in the 1980s when today's low cost airlines did not exist.

“The Committee found that we can learn a lot from New Zealand about how to achieve great things in tourism, but that country also represents a largely untapped market of 4.5 million people who at the moment are discouraged from coming here because there are no direct flights,” he said.

“We believe this is a great opportunity to boost visitor numbers, but it needs an aggressive, united effort by government, both State and local, the tourism industry and major airport owners to develop and present a strong business case to the airlines who, ultimately, will have to make a commercial decision.”

Mr Wing said among the Committee's other recommendations were increased funding for tourist and hospitality skills training, a major review and reorganisation of regional tourism, more meaningful engagement by Tourism Tasmania with tourist operators, more freedom for TT-Line to make maximising passenger numbers its primary objective and a greater tourism marketing effort in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Members of the Committee are the Hon. Don Wing MLC (Chair), the Hon. Kerry Finch MLC, the Hon. Mike Gaffney MLC, the Hon. Vanessa Goodwin MLC and the Hon. Doug Parkinson MLC.

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For further information or comment: Don Wing MLC – 0418 134 599 or 6336 2200

Media Note: The Committee's Report is available on the internet at:
<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/tourism.htm>