

CULTURAL HERITAGE PRACTITIONERS TASMANIA

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Ms Natasha Exel
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Hobart Tas 7000

By email: tht@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Exel

Legislative Council Inquiry into Built Heritage and Tourism

Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania (CHPT) welcomes the Legislative Council inquiry into built heritage and tourism and provides the following submission for the Committee's consideration.

CHPT is a non-profit group comprising heritage practitioners from a range of disciplines. Among our core activities are the identification of heritage issues within Tasmania and advocacy for the recognition and protection of Tasmania's historic and cultural heritage. Formed in 1995, CHPT has an expert and long term perspective on historic heritage management in Tasmania. The CHPT membership represents a significant number of active heritage practitioners in the State and includes various disciplines within the cultural heritage professions – archaeologists, historians, planners, architects, cultural landscape, intangible heritage, museum curators etc.

We make the following submissions against the terms of the inquiry.

1. The current and future potential contribution that built heritage makes to tourism in Tasmania

Tasmanian Visitor Survey data provides quantifiable information showing the current value of cultural heritage to Tasmania's tourism industry. We note the large numbers of tourists visiting or staying in historic towns and cities and visiting specific heritage attractions such as historic houses/properties and designated historic sites.

Not captured in the data is the level of coincidence that exists between many heritage places and their tourism or visitor function. For example, we would note that Sullivans Cove is Hobart's (and Tasmania's) key civic, cultural and dining precinct. Specific attractions such as the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Salamanca Markets figure prominently in visitor activities. The central location and concentration of places and activities makes the Cove a very important destination.

Most importantly however is that tourism and visitor attractions are located within this area because of the heritage values of the Cove, where the combination of historic buildings and streetscapes and the setting of a working port make the place an attractive and interesting place for visitors. Similar findings can also be extrapolated to other cities and towns across Tasmania, where the high level of preservation of town and cityscapes makes our urban environment an attractive destination for locals and visitors alike.

It should also be acknowledged that a strict division between natural and cultural heritage is often artificial, as a co-responsive relationship frequently exists between cultural heritage places and their natural environment or setting.

This is particularly true in Tasmania where a strong motivation for visitors to the State has been the 'Englishness' of the towns and rural areas, something very rare in the rest of Australia, and for Asian and American visitors. This is maintained through historic landscape elements such as mature introduced trees, tree avenues, hedges, small field sizes, historic outbuildings, small meandering roads and lanes, and lack of modern infill. While visitors may not focus on these elements, they form the backdrop to the built elements and give the built heritage and the surrounding landscape a particular quality, an attractiveness and authenticity, thereby significantly enhancing the experience of visitors to Tasmania. There are a number of areas in Tasmania where these landscape qualities persist, most notably the Northern Midlands – Meander area, parts of the southern Midlands, in particular Dysart and the Bagdad Valley, the coal River Valley, the New Norfolk area and the Channel and Huon Valley.

It should also be acknowledged that Tasmania possesses a rich cultural heritage outside its historic buildings. This is its archaeological heritage. This is poorly recognised at present, with only limited places such as Port Arthur and associated sites and the Sarah Island Convict Station being recognised tourist destinations. There are fascinating sites both in Tasmania's cities and major towns, as well as rural areas, relating to many areas of Tasmania's history that could be promoted, or better promoted, for tourism. Examples include a number of the probation stations, west coast and north east Tasmania mining sites, timber industry sites, whaling industry sites, and rural industry sites, all of which lend themselves to tourism either as individual places or as a collection of linked places through for example self-drive or guided tours.

The Tasmanian Government has embarked on a program to make Tasmania a key destination for nature based tourism. Whilst acknowledging the importance of our natural environment as a draw card, we would recommend that cultural heritage remain an important part of current and future marketing and funding strategies and programs.

In doing so however it is essential that the heritage values and rights of heritage owners are not negatively impacted, and the integrity and authenticity of the heritage places and their setting are maintained.

2. The role of Government

All tiers of government have an important role in the funding, management, protection and promotion of Tasmania's cultural heritage. Tasmania's historic heritage must be conserved appropriately and to best practice principles to ensure its survival for future generations. This maintains the heritage resource as a visitor attraction, but most importantly, maintains our cultural heritage for our own sense of place and identity.

CHPT strongly supports the use of legislation as the most effective means of effecting heritage conservation. Cultural heritage is a non-renewable resource. Use and development of heritage places must be sustainable, a measure which is a cornerstone of Tasmania's Resource Management and Planning System, recognising that a duty of trans-generational equity exists so that our natural and physical resources will meet both our current needs, and those of future generations. Tourism is a use and development that should not be distinguished from other forms of development, in both its potential to conserve heritage places (through adaptive reuse, maintenance and so on), but also in its potential to degrade the heritage values of a place where uses or development are inappropriate.

To this end all built heritage tourism, or other heritage tourism, should be guided by cultural heritage sustainability and cultural tourism policy and principles. It is CHPT's view that a Tasmania-specific policy and guidelines are preferable to using generic approaches. Such a policy should reflect the following important policy foundations:

- The Australia ICOMOS 2013 guidelines *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)*.
- The Australian Heritage Commission and CRC Tourism 2001 guidelines *Successful Tourism at Heritage Places*.
- The *ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter 2002*.

Other important considerations which should be part of any state-wide policy include:

- Built heritage tourism in Tasmania should be based on a state-wide strategic approach that utilises synergies within and outside cultural heritage tourism, and considers the range of potential heritage tourism places.
- The heritage significance of visited places must be maintained or enhanced, not negatively impacted.
- The authenticity of heritage places must be respected.
- The aim of cultural heritage tourism should be to provide an experience that interests and educates visitors, and not to trivialise or sensationalise the place or its history.
- Heritage owners should be fully involved in the planning, promotion and presentation of their heritage places.

CHPT see the establishment of such policy and guidelines as being the role of State government, although in developing these there should be close consultation with

heritage owners, heritage organisations, tourism organisations, local government and the general public.

Government has an existing small program to assist heritage owners with the cost of essential conservation works, however assistance to heritage owners generally in Tasmania is woeful. The level of government assistance to heritage owners with high conservation costs should be a matter for consideration, especially with respect to small organisations or individual owners. This may apply to some tourism operations, but would be equally relevant for other types of heritage with high conservation costs including for example churches. Government should develop some criteria as to what could be eligible for funding. Assistance could be in the form of small-medium grants for conservation planning or essential conservation works or repair, or as rebates on land tax, and rates etc.

In CHPT's view, the State government's role should also include (and this should be reflected in overarching policy / guidelines):

- To develop marketing for cultural heritage-based tourism and assist in marketing (in collaboration with heritage owners, heritage organisations, tourism organisations, and local government).
- To be a source of heritage advice to heritage owners (through its heritage agencies).
- To be responsible for, coordinate and carry out compliance and impact monitoring on heritage places (in collaboration with heritage owners).
- To undertake, cultural heritage-based tourism research to understand what visitors want, to identify new opportunities, and to understand the impacts of tourism on the heritage (in collaboration with heritage owners, heritage organisations, tourism organisations, and local government).
- To review and revise State government policy, guidelines and strategy, accreditation and other statewide management mechanisms for cultural heritage-based tourism.

In CHPT's view, local government also has a role in cultural heritage-based tourism. The local government role could include (and this should be reflected in overarching policy / guidelines):

- Providing assistance with the development of strategic approaches.
- Providing assistance with marketing.
- To be a source of heritage advice to heritage owners (where it has professional heritage expertise on staff).
- To act as a regional liaison point for private heritage owners, and help facilitate communication between private owners.
- To assist state government with compliance and impact monitoring on heritage places.

3. The role of tourism organisations

In CHPT's view, the appropriate role of tourism organisations in relation to cultural heritage-based tourism includes:

- To provide tourism expertise to the development of strategic tourism initiatives.
- To be a source of practical and business advice to heritage owners.
- To assist in marketing cultural heritage-based tourism opportunities.
- To undertake, in collaboration with heritage organisations and the state government cultural heritage-based tourism research to understand what visitors want, to identify new opportunities, and to understand the impacts of tourism on the heritage.

In CHPT's view it is not appropriate for tourism organisations to provide accreditation for, or to monitor or otherwise evaluate the success of, cultural heritage-based tourism, as this would be a conflict of interest, given that they will in most cases have a commercial or other vested interest.

4. The role of heritage organisations

In commenting on this matter CHPT assumes 'heritage organisation' does not include government heritage services (CHPT has included this under government, above).

CHPT recognises two types of heritage organisation:

1. Professional heritage organisation
2. Local heritage interest group

We see the first group as being able to provide expert heritage advice at the policy and strategic level to government and in relation to establishing guidelines, accreditation, monitoring regimes, etc.; and we see the second group as primarily having a role, through their in depth local knowledge and interests in identifying and presenting local heritage (places and objects), and in some cases, as with local history rooms and small museums, as being part of local tourism opportunities.

Both groups should be consulted as part of all consultation on this area, and where collaborative development is advocated (see above).

5. Any relevant considerations in other jurisdictions

CHPT has no comment against this Term of Reference.

6. Any other matters incidental thereto

In summary, CHPT makes the following points:

- Heritage tourism must be sustainable. Whilst tourism can play an important and valuable role in the conservation of heritage places and associated economic development and local employment, unsustainable tourism use and development degrades the heritage resource, and ultimately will be counter-productive. Heritage tourism is one, but not the only way for heritage places, towns and cities to be used and conserved.
- Heritage places have the greatest value to the Tasmanian and local communities. Tourism is an opportunity to share these places, meanings and

stories with a wider audience, but local appreciation of these places is paramount and should not be compromised. Consultation and local community engagement is vital. In some rural regions, or smaller country towns, tourism has evolved as a key component of the local economy. The dominance of tourism facilities and attractions over local uses and services represents a loss of identity and sense of place.

- The development of heritage places for tourism purposes should be based on sound business and feasibility studies. Where privately-owned, cultural heritage-based tourism should be privately funded, and not subject to government financial contributions or bailouts. The potential impacts from tourism should be assessed just as any other use or development would be determined. The cumulative impacts of different tourism uses and developments should be assessed and managed holistically.
- Clear and appropriate policies, strategies and guidelines should form the basis of good heritage management, including tourism uses and developments. Professional expertise and local knowledge is central to sound outcomes. We also note the benefits of collaborating with museums in developing state-wide strategic approaches and using museums in tourism opportunities to provide a richer, more multi-dimensional experience.
- Heritage tourism should be as varied as Tasmania's heritage. Whereas sites such as Port Arthur may continue to dominate in the heritage market, there are as many possible sustainable tourism experiences as there are diverse heritage places, sites and landscapes in Tasmania.

We are pleased to provide this submission to the Committee and if further information is required CHPT can be contacted on the details below.

Yours sincerely

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