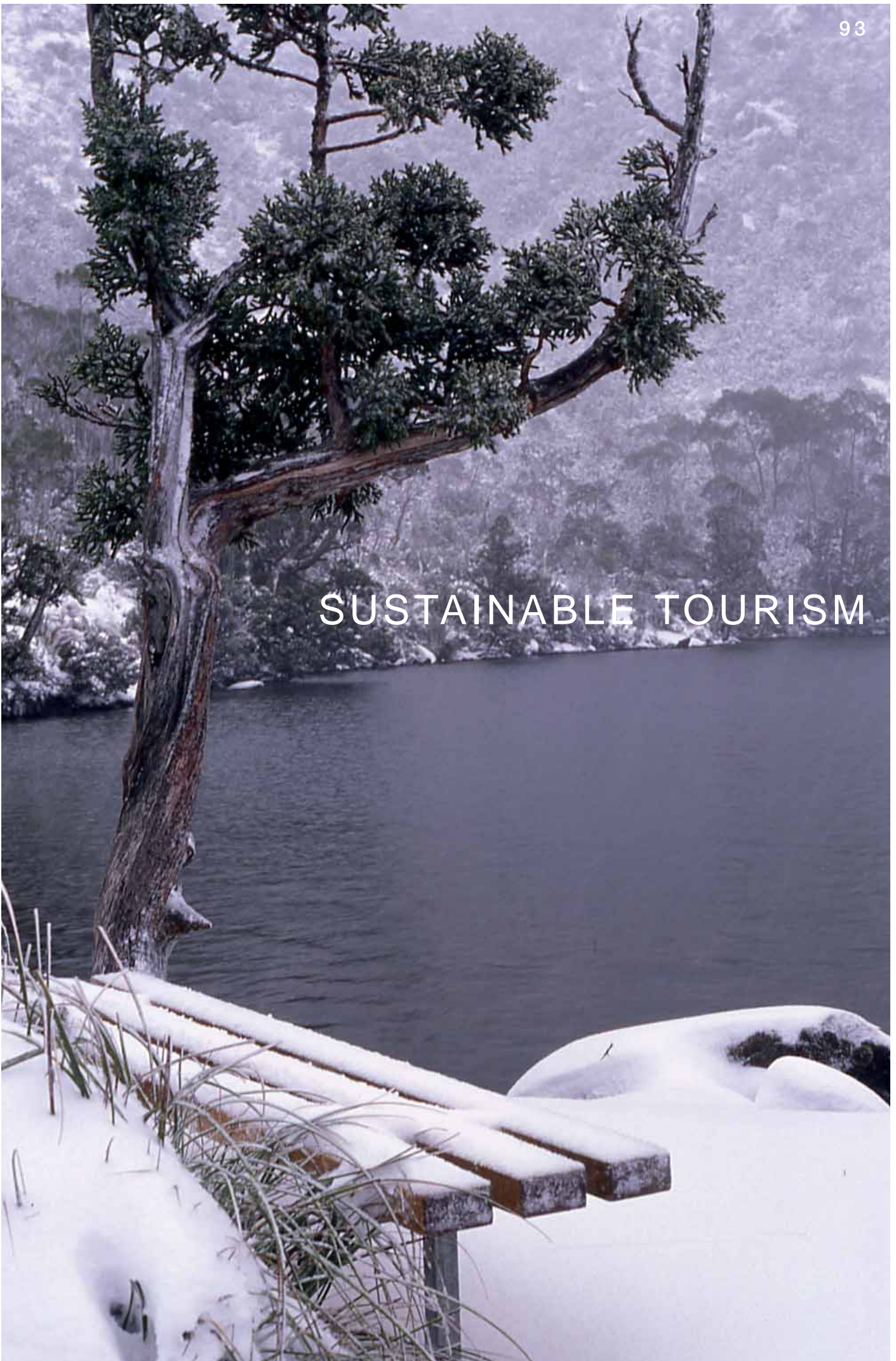


SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



The natural and cultural resources of the Huon Valley such as landscapes, waterways, forests, wilderness and coastal beaches as well as the products derived from this resource base such as the apples, timber and fishing industries are important assets. The area also has a rich Aboriginal heritage and the built heritage forms an important component of the character of the towns for both local residents and visitors.

The Huon Valley has a very strong tourism product that forms an important component of the region's economy and will be a major long-term economic driver for the area. The attractiveness of the Huon Valley to visitors is the scenic quality of the rural landscape and adjacent waterways. This is particularly relevant in relation to major viewpoints and vistas available from public roads and public reserves. Council's strategy recognises the importance of maintaining and enhancing the natural, scenic and cultural heritage values and the amenity of the Valley and the need to provide strategic directions to ensure that these assets, important to the area, are recognised and taken into account in land use planning decisions.

New development in the municipal area should have a positive influence and protects important landscapes and streetscapes. Poorly designed buildings and inappropriately located development can have an adverse impact on scenic qualities, heritage, amenity of communities and the tourism industry. Development that is designed to complement the qualities of the natural and cultural heritage values of the municipal area and protect scenic road touring corridors is encouraged. Priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of landscapes within these viewfields. Development, which would adversely impact on the landscape character and amenity of these areas, should not be supported. In addition, proposals for development which would lead to the loss of trees or forest of high nature conservation or landscape value or damage to the ecology of such forest will be subject to critical review

Council also recognises that a large area of the Valley comprises working landscapes that form the economic backbone of the local economy. Farming and forestry have made a significant contribution to the current landscapes and are critically important from a tourism perspective.

Tourism in the Huon Valley

Tourism is seen as having the potential to be a major contributor to the economy and growing sector of employment. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 census data shows that accommodation, café and restaurant sector of the economy employed 288 persons – 184 females and 104 males or 5.2% of the workforce (up 1.54% since 2001).

With the more recent improved economic conditions and the continued operations of the Devonport to Melbourne vehicle ferries (although noting demise of Sydney 'Spirit') and 'no frills' airfares, the whole of Tasmania has experienced increased tourism numbers. For the municipal area the increased visitor numbers have also been helped by the construction and promotion of the Tahune Air Walk, redevelopment of the Hastings Caves attraction, and marketing generally of the Huon Trail and the various attractions of the area.

With increased visitors comes increased development activity in general. Tourism is therefore seen as a major initiator of development to which this Strategy responds.

According to the Tasmanian Visitor Survey, the year to date holiday visitor numbers (from interstate or overseas) for the 24 months ending 31 December 2004 were:

Places & Attractions Visited or Stayed	Total Visitors (passed through or stopped overnight)		% Change of Visitors on the Huon Trail		Visitors staying 1 + nights		% Change of Visitors staying 1 + nights		Average Length of Stay of Visitors who stayed 1 + Nights
	2005	2006	Dec 04- Dec 05	Dec 05- Dec 06	2005	2006	Dec 04 - Dec 05	Dec 05- Dec 06	
Dover	40,000	48,100	-7.2%	+9%	8,300	10,200	-24%	+23%	2.1
Geeveston	94,400	93,400	+1.2%	-2%	4,000	4,100	0%	+2.5%	1.8
Huonville	134,400	132,100	-5.8%	-1%	6,700	6,700	1%	0%	2.6
Bruny Island * (from July 2001)	35,100	37,800	+18.3%	+16%	10,600	10,300	11%	-3%	2.4
Woodbridge * (from July 2002)	41,500	37,300	+14.6%	-17%	1,200	1,200	40%	0%	2.3
Tahune Airwalk (from July 2002)	91,800	95,000	-2.8%	+3.4%	2,200	N/A	-0.8%	N/A	1.1
Hasting Caves	41,800	42,100	+96%	+0.8%	500	N/A	-1.3%	N/A	1.0
Hartz Mountains National Park	10,000	N/A	+40%	N/A	700	N/A	-2.6%	N/A	2.7
Cockle Creek	2,300	14,600	N/A	+634%	200	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.0
Total Holiday Visitors to Huon Trail	491,300	50,4000	+ 7.2%	+80.4%	34,400	32,800	-12%	+7.5%	2.2

* Within Kingborough Municipal Area

From these figures and the other relevant data under the 2005 Tasmanian Visitor Survey, the following observations can be made:

- Total visitors to Tasmania increased over the 12 months from 31 December 2004 to 31 December 2005 from 760,700 to 788,000 (increase of 4%), however visitor nights decreased as did the number of holiday visitors (the increase in visitor numbers was a result of non-holiday visitors);
- Despite the decrease in holiday visitors between 2004 and 2005, the total visitors to the Huon Trail increased 7.2% in 2005;
- Visitors on the Huon Trail Touring Route are more likely to be travelling on holiday rather than visiting friends or relatives, or on business or employment;
- 50% of visitors to the Huon Trail Touring Route went to one or more places along the route.;

- Over the 12 month period from December 2004 to December 2005, the increase in visitor numbers were to Bruny Island, Woodbridge and Hastings Cave. Two of these destinations are within the Kingborough municipal area.

One point to note is that the Huon Valley was a poor performing region for overnight stays. The tourism forecast for the next few years is that visitor numbers will continue to increase but at a more gradual rate.

Despite the economic importance of the tourism industry to the Tasmanian economy, there is a belief that the industry is not achieving its full economic potential. The industry is characterised by four main factors:

- A small share of both the domestic and international tourism markets.
- Domestic Australian markets represent the core source of visitors.
- The industry is seasonal, has few large operators and is dependent on air and sea travel.
- The State constitutes a 'touring' visitor destination, and is not site specific.

The Tasmanian Government strategy for the long-term development and promotion of the tourism industry, *Tourism 21*, recognises visitors to the State predominantly follow touring routes and visit attractions and towns on their way to major destinations. The key elements of the strategy are:

- Develop and bundle products and services into tailored experiences that match the needs, expectations and aspirations of potential customers.
- Where there are product gaps or deficiencies, action to develop products to accommodate customer needs is required.
- Develop touring routes to give purpose to visits, increase the length of stay and to guide investment by government and business.

Promotion of the journey as part of the tourism experience is now widely recognised, particularly where the road corridor provides the tourist with scenic vistas and key component of Tourism Tasmania's Tourism Development Framework. The Framework places an emphasis on touring routes and trails, outlining key existing routes on a state-wide and regional basis which link key destinations and attractions. Tourism Tasmania's Tourism Development Framework defines a touring route as a:

- Journey: a primary themed route between clusters.
- Themed tourism trail: a localised special interest or themed route within a cluster or off a journey.
- Cluster: a critical mass of competitive tourism product including one or more major attractions in a concentrated geographical area.

The Huon Valley is an identified destination within the State tourism strategy as a themed tourism experience and is branded as the Huon Trail. The Huon Trail connects Hobart with the Huon Valley and D'Entrecasteaux Channel. It includes the Kingborough and Huon Valley municipal areas and provides a coordinated approach to marketing tourist product in the region.

Although the Huon Trail 'brand' forms part of the Southern Tasmanian Touring Route Strategy it was originally an initiative of, and adopted by, the Huon Valley and Kingborough Councils in 1997, as a means of promoting the many smaller attractions and tourism operators within the region south of Hobart. The partnership approach with Kingborough Council acknowledges the fact that tourists or visitors do not recognise municipal boundaries. The Huon Trail was ahead of its time and this approach has since been picked up at a State level, with the whole of Tasmania

now being promoted as an integrated package of different touring route destinations.

The Huon Trail brand is used to promote tourism development that is consistent with the area it is located in and builds on the natural advantages of the area. The core values of the brand in order of rank are natural beauty, friendly and adventurous.

Tourism operators are encouraged to promote their businesses in a manner that is consistent with these brand values. The tourist route comprises the Channel Highway from Hobart to Huonville and the Huon Highway from Hobart to Southport and also includes main roads on Bruny Island. It has coordinated signage and promotion of destinations along the touring route.

Huonville, Franklin, Cygnet, Geeveston and Dover are the most important settlements for tourism in the municipal area and are located on and connected by the tourist route. The key centres are supported by smaller settlements, which are attractions in themselves by their setting and surrounding natural and landscape values.

The tourism strategy embodied within Tourism Tasmania's *New Directions of Our Island*, promotes enhancement of the 'experience' within the Huon Trail area. There are three key criteria that are identified as needing to be met to drive greater tourism activity within the municipal area. These are:

- ▶ Accessibility - providing value for money with friendly locals that is easy to get to;
- ▶ Aspirational - a destination that one must travel to at least once in your life; and
- ▶ Multi-themed Experience - a place that provides everything from historic sites, shopping opportunities, food and wine, educational opportunities and local culture.

A more flexible approach will therefore be necessary in planning for new tourism related developments. It is Council's intention to strengthen the key centres by encouraging development to locate within them and improve the presentation of streetscapes and local parks. This will assist in building a critical mass of tourism infrastructure and will provide focal points within the Huon Valley. Ecotourism is a potential growth area given the importance of natural values to the Huon Trail brand and the Huon Valley's role as a gateway into the World Heritage Area. New development should complement and support the Huon Trail brand and experience.

Ensuring that sufficient and appropriate public infrastructure is provided can assist the growth of tourism-based industries. Much of this infrastructure needs to be improved and some of the main identified problems include:

- ▶ Poor quality of Cockle Creek Road.
- ▶ Relative poor quality of Esperance Coast Road.
- ▶ Lack of seal on Hastings Cave Road.
- ▶ Insufficient berthing and other support facilities for boat cruising and yachting.
- ▶ Need to improve the quality of principal parks and walking trails in the major towns.
- ▶ Need to improve and ensure consistency of road sign identification of key tourist features and main tourist routes.

Tourist Accommodation

The Huon Valley both benefits and suffers from the fact that it is so close to Hobart. The area is seen as a one-day destination and the Huon Trail 'region' (as a recognised touring route destination) has the lowest overnight stay record in Tasmania. This results in many smaller

tourism operators not achieving their potential, as visitors tend to concentrate on the larger and better promoted operations attractions. This is somewhat contrary to what the original Huon Trail strategy was trying to achieve and there is now even greater need to encourage visitors to extend their stay.

The Tourism Development Kit produced by Tourism Tasmania (Tourism Tas, 2004) reported that the Huon and Channel region needed to develop from a day trip destination to an overnight stay one. In 2003, 373,330 visitors (54% of all Tasmanian 'visitors') went to the region, yet only 25,111 (7% of all visitors) stayed one or more nights.

An increase in overnight visitors results in stimulating more expenditure (increased 'tourism yield') than day visitors and will create more jobs in the municipal area. From a tourism development perspective, this means that increased accommodation facilities are needed and a marketing exercise that encourages people to want to stay overnight. A current emphasis is being placed on determining what distinguishes the Huon Valley (and the Kingborough area) from other parts of Tasmania. Tourism is extremely competitive and the Huon Valley must compete against other Tasmanian regions for visitor numbers.

It is important for the future development of tourism in the Huon Valley that the existing natural assets are protected. These features enable the municipal area to compete economically against other areas. Opportunities to generate employment need to be taken without causing environmental damage.

A number of specific development opportunities have been investigated for tourist accommodation facilities that have been frustrated by some overly restrictive provisions of the existing planning schemes (i.e. restriction on farm stay type accommodation within rural zones). There is opportunity to diversify primary producing incomes through an increase in farm stay accommodation.

Recognising the poor record of overnight stays in the municipal area, there is an opportunity for entrepreneurial developers willing to establish additional motel accommodation in the major settlements, as well as larger eco-tourism style accommodation in the far south region (south of Dover). Promotion of those facilities should be based on advertising those experiences and attractions that could be visited during a 1 or 2 day excursion. Encouragement will also be given to the inclusion of conference facilities and in the surrounding area a range of fine food restaurants.

The Huon Valley is also a significant destination for the caravan, motor home and camping market. At present existing facilities operate past capacity during peak periods and there is clearly a demonstrated demand. This is particularly relevant in expanding overnight stays in the area because visitors to Tasmania with a caravan or campervan stay almost twice as long than those using hotel/motel accommodation. An ongoing problem in the area is the limited number of serviced sites and facilities. Motor homes stop overnight at improper locations (roadside camping) and there are subsequent environmental, aesthetic and neighbour concerns. There is a need to provide opportunities for site developments with supporting infrastructure including toilets and washing facilities. Such sites need to be located near key towns, attractions or areas of interest for the increasing caravan, motor home and camping market.

The Strategy encourages good, innovative developments that add to the overall tourism product. There needs to be a flexibility within the standards that does not compromise environmental performance. Ecologically sustainable accommodation should therefore be the standard for accommodation outside of existing developed areas.

Tourist Attractions

The key to a successful tourism industry is providing and maintaining the integrity of tourist attractions. Attractions provide the reason why visitors go to an area and are central to the tourism experience. They also provide economic value through the amount of time a visitor stays in an area and have an important impact on the development of towns and regions.

An attraction, as defined by Tourism Tasmania, is:

A place, venue or focus of activities that sets out to attract visitors from local or tourist populations, and is managed accordingly and provides a fun and pleasurable experience and an enjoyable place for customers to spend their leisure time.

The Huon Valley has a significant number of important tourist attractions, which include the Tahune Air Walk, Hartz Mountains and Hastings Caves and Thermal Pool. Council supports new attractions that build on the Huon Trail brand and experience, particularly those that build upon the 'far south' experience.

The natural and cultural resources are an important component of the tourism product in the municipal area. In particular the landscapes, views, waterways, beaches and wilderness areas and associated walks and recreation will form the backbone of the long-term viability and growth of the industry and hence that is where most attractions will be.

The existing scenic road corridors, particularly along the designated Huon Trail (Channel and Huon Highways), are also a vital component of the touring experience and therefore it is important they are not degraded by indiscriminate corridor development. Council will seek to maintain the integrity of the natural and scenic qualities along these road corridors.

Another major component of the existing tourism product is based on value adding to resource and agricultural based industries particularly boutique scale operations and home industries based on arts and crafts. These operations provide for the diversification of small farming operations and Council supports tourism based on value adding subject to the appropriate management of traffic and access, safety, environmental and amenity impacts.

Tourist Signage and Directional Signage

Tourist attractions and accommodation often rely on advance and location signage for visitors to find them, particularly in rural areas and locations off the main tourist route. As a consequence signage is often a crucial component to the economic success of a small tourist operation. However, signage that is inappropriately located or is out of scale with the locality can be a road safety hazard, cause visual clutter and undermine the scenic qualities of road corridors. The end result is that such signage becomes counterproductive and destroys the qualities that attract visitors to an area in the first place.

To address this issue and provide a consistent framework for advance and location signage the State Government developed the Tasmanian Visitor Information System (TVIS). The TVIS provides standardised roadside tourist information and directional signage and is consistent with the Huon Trail approach to marketing tourist product in the region.

Council supports this approach to the provision of tourist directional signage and through the planning scheme will ensure that such signage in the municipal area complies with TVIS provisions.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Directions	Guiding Principles
<p><i>Protect and enhance the Huon Trail visual landscape as an asset of the Huon Valley.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage development that builds on the Huon Trail brand.</i></p> <p><i>Strengthen the key centres of Huonville, Cygnet, Franklin, Geeveston and Dover by encouraging tourism development to locate within them.</i></p> <p><i>Provide a consistent and coordinated approach to roadside information.</i></p> <p><i>Only consider larger scale tourism development at appropriate locations outside key centres through a planning scheme amendment process.</i></p>	<p><i>Ensure tourist attractions in rural or coastal areas or adjacent to waterways rely on that location for the actual attraction.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage the development of new tourist accommodation and caravan parks within key settlements where reticulated water and sewerage can be provided.</i></p> <p><i>Outside of the major settlements allow small-scale overnight accommodation, small-scale agricultural based boutique operations and home industries based on arts and crafts, subject to individual site assessment.</i></p> <p><i>Medium to large-scale development outside of serviced areas must enhance and protect any adjoining rural uses, natural value of the Huon Valley and transport network.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure the provision of access and interpretation facilities for waterways, coastal areas, state forests, national parks and World Heritage Areas are subject to appropriate design standards.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure signs are located so they do not cause visual clutter and detract from the natural beauty of important landscapes and undermine the scenic qualities of road corridors.</i></p> <p><i>Tourism developments are not to detract from the environmental, landscape or agricultural production values of the Huon Valley.</i></p>