

RIVER DERWENT FERRY SERVICE STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

NOVEMBER 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the Land and water on which Greater Hobart and the River Derwent is located. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal people who live, work on and enjoy the River Derwent and its surrounds.

From the heights of kunanyi/ Mount Wellington to the depths of the River Derwent, the Country on which Greater Hobart and the River Derwent flows is deeply embedded within the history of thousands of generations of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and bound up inseparably with their culture and identity. We recognise this deep history, and the continuing connection of Tasmanian Aboriginal people to Land, Waterway and Sky.

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Introduction

Public transport and the River Derwent

The Tasmanian Government plans, designs and manages public transport in Tasmania. This includes public and school bus services, and the Hobart (Brooke Street Pier) to Bellerive (Bellerive Pier) ferry service.

Using the River Derwent, the Bellerive to Hobart ferry service commenced as a trial in 2021 and was made ongoing in 2022. The Tasmanian Government, along with its partners, is now planning how to expand ferry services on the River Derwent.

The Draft River Derwent Ferry Service Masterplan proposes where to put new ferry sites, how to link them with services, and a proposed order of priority. This was developed by assessing each potential site against a range of criteria, and considering sites, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

While the Masterplan looks to build on the popularity and success of the existing Bellerive to Hobart ferry service, the plan acknowledges that the River Derwent is an already busy, capital city waterway, with an active mix of commercial, recreational, and educational and/or scientific users. The existing use of the River Derwent needs to be carefully balanced with the opportunity to expand public transport services that have shown to be well supported by Hobart commuters.

The Masterplan acknowledges that consultation with all river users and the community will be required as work progresses on the activation planning pathways and implementation planning.

The Masterplan Strategic Overview outlines the activation planning pathways required to introduce expanded ferry services. Expanding River Derwent ferry services is a significant body of work that requires the development of a detailed implementation plan which needs coordinated input from multiple parties and levels of government.

Consultation may be specific to individual stakeholders and their needs or seek to attract a broad range of feedback from multiple groups and the community. This consultation will acknowledge the work undertaken by Tasmanian Government partners in any ferry service expansion, such as four Greater Hobart Councils securing Australian Government funding for ferry site infrastructure.

There will be opportunities for multiple stages of engagement, as the process moves from the draft Masterplan through to implementation and delivery of services and infrastructure.

Greater Hobart transport vision

In 2019, the Hobart City Deal was developed which was a ten-year shared vision between the Australian, Tasmanian and Great Hobart Councils. The Greater Hobart Transport vision stated:

“We will deliver an integrated and collaborative approach to transport management and continue to invest in a reliable, sustainable and cost-effective transport system with a focus on prioritising active and public transport...”

Actions under the City Deal, including the introduction of passenger ferries, is informed by the following factors:

1. Efficient movement of people.
2. Improved passenger experience.
3. Responsiveness to new technologies.
4. Pedestrian and cycling improvements.
5. Current and future land use.
6. Infrastructure investment.

In August 2021 the Tasmanian Government trialed a 12-month ferry service between Hobart and Bellerive. Given the trial’s popularity with commuters, the Tasmanian Government committed \$19 million over four years to make the ferry trial an ongoing service.

As part of the Australian Government election in 2022, the Australian Government has committed an additional \$20 million to the four Greater Hobart Councils for infrastructure to further support ferry services on the River Derwent.

River Derwent ferry trial

The River Derwent Ferry trial has to date largely been commuter focused. During the first 12 months of operation, the service attracted more than 120,000 trips. However, in October 2022, Saturday services were introduced.

Saturdays have proven very popular, carrying an average of 600 passengers per day until the onset of colder weather.

Separately, ferry services have also played a role in providing event-based transport such as the services put on during the 2022 Ashes match at Blundstone Arena demonstrating the potential capacity for ferries to have a role beyond regular timetabled services.

Development of a River Derwent Ferry Service Masterplan

The Tasmanian Government has committed to expanding the ferry service to other sites in Greater Hobart under a River Derwent Ferry Service Masterplan.

The Tasmanian Government's objectives for future ferry services build on the aims of the Hobart City Deal to:

- Reduce traffic congestion by providing peak time commuters with an alternative way to get around the Greater Hobart area.
- Support travel to events in key sites.
- Benefit and revitalise key locations on the River Derwent.

Guiding principles have been developed which underpin the above objectives and provide the framework for the establishment of River Derwent ferry sites, these objectives are summarised below.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A partnership approach

River Derwent ferry services will be a partnership between the Tasmanian Government and the Clarence, Glenorchy, Hobart and Kingborough Councils.

Improved efficiency and access.

New routes and timetables must contribute to:

- Easing of traffic congestion in light of:
 - Changing travel patterns.
 - Inter-peak commuter travel needs.
 - Leisure and recreational travel overlap.
- Improving Greater Hobart accessibility:
 - Through promoting active travel.
 - By improving cross river transport resilience.

- Encouraging public transport use:
 - Increasing modal choice to areas which are infrequently serviced by public transport.
 - On the existing public transport network without undermining existing services.
- Mitigation of event management impacts.
- Opportunities for placemaking and local activation.

Reliable services

Ferry site locations need to be in locations with suitable waters to ensure services are not unreasonably impacted by weather and wave conditions.

Environmental awareness

To minimise the environmental impact of public transport:

- Ferry site location and routes must consider impacts upon coastal areas.
- Opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through mode shift and associated infrastructure will be considered.
- Exposure to sea level rise and inundation will be taken into account.

The Draft Masterplan outlines a pathway to expand ferry services on the River Derwent in stages, while building upon the aims of the Hobart City Deal.

River Derwent Ferry

Expansion Planning

Planning study

To inform the expansion of a River Derwent ferry service the Department of State Growth commissioned a planning study to analyse and assess potential site sites on the river and develop ferry network options.

This study was underpinned by the guiding principles and included an initial assessment of 33 potential site locations before narrowing this list down to 10 sites selected through a process of a Multi-criteria Assessment (MCA) followed by Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis.

The MCA and SWOT assessed key factors including:

- Travel time assessment and comparison between ferry trips and car travel.
- Marine suitability for ferry sites.
- Environmental suitability for ferry locations.
- Current and future demand in terms of population and employment.
- Accessibility and connectivity to public and active transport networks.
- Land use such as proximity to attractors.
- Traffic performance - ability to contribute to reducing congestion.
- Public transport network integration, ensuring public transport benefits.

Ferry site identification

The planning study undertaken for the Masterplan established 8 priority locations for ferry sites from the initial list of 33 sites to facilitate an expanded ferry network on the River Derwent, these are listed below.

Rank 1 – Regatta Point.

Rank 2 – Sandy Bay (Rowing Club).

Rank 3 – Sandy Bay (Casino).

Rank 4 – Wilkinsons Point.

Rank 5 – Battery Point (Derwent Lane).

Rank 6 – Montagu Bay.

Rank 7 – Howrah Point.

Rank 8 – Lindisfarne.

Network development and site identification

The development of a future ferry network is driven by a network planning approach that aims to best meet the guiding principles. The 8 priority locations were assessed against the guiding principles, with particular emphasis on ensuring new ferry site sites and routes contribute to the easing of traffic congestion and also encourage public transport use.

It is important to note that any expanded ferry network needs not only to ease traffic congestion and build on the existing ferry service success but ensure it neither unintentionally impacts existing services (i.e., diluting well performing bus services) or undermining whole-of-network performance by selecting potentially sub-optimal site locations.

The factors used in the MCA and SWOT analysis, such as current and future demand and land use attractors, were also used to differentiate between the sites and identify which sites should be included in a two-stage ferry expansion plan.

It should also be noted that the Greater Hobart Council's ferry infrastructure analysis was reflected in the network development and site identification with the inclusion of proposed sites at Geilston Bay and Kingston Beach in the top 8 priority locations.

An Expanded River Derwent Ferry Service

Proposed service expansion

Of the eight potential sites prioritised, six were identified considering operational concepts and staging an expansion plan focusing on two areas was suggested to build on the success of the Hobart to Bellerive service and contribute towards the goals of the Greater Hobart Transport Vision.

The initial expansion would focus on achieving the best transport benefits in terms of easing congestion and public transport uptake. The second step would seek to introduce a more comprehensive network, offering direct weekday peak services, supplemented by a stitched inter-peak network that would increase public transport links across the river and provide for event-specific travel.

A stitched ferry service has multiple stops as opposed to a direct service. It is used in the inter-peak when the demand for travel by commuters is lower and less time sensitive. Recreational and leisure customers are more likely to use ferry services in the inter-peak. A stitched network also has benefits as it maximises connectivity between different locations.

Any significant changes to an expanded River Derwent Ferry service will need to be triggered by appropriate criteria. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Securing recurrent funding to enable the procurement of expanded ferry services.
- Detailed proving up of the proposed sites such as environmental assessment.
- Feasible land and water side infrastructure for use as a ferry site is agreed upon by partner councils and the Tasmanian Government.
- Allocation of adequate funding by partner councils for ferry sites and landside infrastructure, including funding and program works for supporting active transport infrastructure, and relevant parking strategies relating to surrounding streets and public land.

The above triggers are minimum requirements. At individual sites locations, network impacts, and other strategic or localised factors will also need to be considered. For example, approval or commencement of specific developments that suitably activate a potential location may be required, such as Wilkinsons Point.

Easing congestion

The first step in an expanded ferry service would be focused on providing connections to the Hobart CBD where the customer benefits in terms of faster travel times and directness are greatest and where ferry services can offer an alternative to a vehicle trip across the Tasman Bridge. Locations such as Lindisfarne, and potentially Howrah, align with these aims, however, other origins may be suitable based on localised factors and stakeholder consultation.

Direct ferry services (preferred by commuters) from these locations would help contribute to a reduction in peak traffic congestion on the Tasman Bridge which carries the highest traffic volumes in Greater Hobart.

Direct ferry services to the city would provide the shortest travel time, a key consideration for private vehicle commuters. Based on this, an initial ferry service expansion is proposed to provide direct ferry links to the city from Lindisfarne and other select sites based on localised issues and stakeholder consultation.

Geilston Bay does not form part of the ferry expansion plan as it has lower demographic demand and recreational attractors compared to Lindisfarne. Montagu Bay does not have any travel time benefits as it is located too close to the Tasman Bridge, nor does it have the current and future demand in terms of residential catchment or land use attractors.

The next step for activation planning of initial expansion is stakeholder engagement and consultation before moving towards detailed planning. These steps may indicate how ferry site locations could be rolled out in terms of timeframes. For example, one ferry site location may be easier to develop and could be activated first.

Figure 1 provides an example of an easing congestion-based expansion.

Figure 1: Map provides an overview of the River Derwent from Wilkinsons Point to Kingston Beach, showing a Building Connectivity ferry network using both direct and stitched routes and includes an off-peak/even service from multiple locations to Hobart, Wilkinsons Point, Regatta Point and Bellerive using stitched network only.

Building connectivity

The next step in the ferry expansion process aims to build connections along the River, based on established triggers being met. It would offer a more comprehensive network that draws in the northern suburbs and southern suburbs of Sandy Bay and Kingston as well as events-based travel to Wilkinsons Point and Regatta Point.

This stage in the ferry expansion would see some site locations have direct weekday peak services, supplemented by a stitched inter-peak network that would increase public transport links across the river and provide for event travel.

For example, Wilkinsons Point is considered a location with future strong recreational and employment attractors, primarily to be used for event-based travel as the existing bus services along Main Road and the Brooker Highway are strong public transport corridors.

While, Regatta Point, with its close proximity to Macquarie Point, is also considered a strong recreational attractor and primarily to be used for event-based travel. Depending on the timing of the new Arts, Entertainment and Sports precinct, Regatta Point as a ferry site may need to be brought forward into Expansion 1.

Sandy Bay Casino is the preferred location for a ferry site in the Sandy Bay area as it has strong existing recreational attractors. Battery Point does not provide the travel time benefit compared to the Sandy Bay Casino due to its close proximity to the Hobart waterfront.

Kingston Beach is also included in Expansion 2, as it is a strong recreational attractor. This location also has the potential to be an alternative route to relieve Southern Outlet traffic congestion.

Placemaking and local Activation

Placemaking and the activation of local spaces are significant benefits of expanded River Derwent ferry services. The ferry network will be a catalyst for placemaking opportunities which will lead to increased social and economic activity along the River Derwent's waterfront areas.

Enhancing the place element of a ferry site will entice people to visit and stay in the area as well as increase the attraction and utilisation of the ferry network, especially outside peak travel times. It is also important to create better connections to the ferry sites through improved walking and cycling connections, as most people will be travelling on foot or cycling to the ferry.

The provision of good walking and cycling connections within ferry site catchments is an important aspect of placemaking and encouraging uptake of public transport. It is well understood that successful ferry services rely heavily on local users using active transport options to access sites. These walking and cycling connections not only provide access to ferry services but also can improve local linkages along waterfronts, to local businesses and community facilities such as green spaces.

The Tasmanian Government, councils, commercial partners, and the community need to work together to maximise opportunities for placemaking through enhancing the place function of ferry site locations and activation of waterfront areas.

Activation Planning

Assessment of potential ferry wharf sites

The planned activation of an expanded River Derwent ferry network requires a multifaceted pathway of stakeholder engagement and consultation, detailed planning, implementation, infrastructure activation and service delivery. The Tasmanian Government will need to work in partnership with councils and other stakeholders to progress the ferry expansion plan. The first step will be engaging with local councils on this River Derwent Ferry Service Masterplan.

As the engagement and consultation and planning pathways progress, it is likely that there will be a need to adjust the ferry expansion plan based on feedback, more detailed assessment of suitability of sites, agreed direction of available infrastructure funding with councils to sites identified for services and ongoing operational funding for ferry services.

The process below, provides a general overview of this pathway:

Engagement and Consultation

- Greater Hobart Councils.
- Relevant state agencies/ authorities.
- Adjacent owners.
- Community.
- Relevant River Derwent users Existing operators.
- Derwent Estuary Program.

Planning

- Environmental impact assessment and approvals.
- Maritime impact assessment and approvals.
- Aboriginal Heritage Cultural Heritage.
- Greater Hobart councils (in administrating \$20M infrastructure funding).
- Land use planning approvals Demand analysis.
- Funding and cost analysis.
- Ferry network service development.
- Identification of procurement process.
- Supporting/enabling project identification.

Implementation

- Ferry network service finalisation.
- Land and wharf side infrastructure concepts.
- Vessel requirements and specifications.
- Wharf delivery strategy.
- Supporting/enabling projects.
- Procurement commencement.

Infrastructure Activation and Service Delivery

- Land and wharf side infrastructure delivery.
- Procurement completion.
- Supporting/enabling project activation.
- Service delivery transition in and ongoing operation

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