RESPONSE TO COVID-19
In March 2020, Tasmania’s tourism industry was dismantled at the hands of the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, tourism across Australia and the rest of the world was heavily impacted.

West by North West supported our region’s tourism industry through the initial disruption/distress phase; continues to facilitate activity and planning during the lockdown/uncertainty phase and will collaborate with industry and State government on the reactivation of our industry through marketing, product development and leadership.

This document outlines our strategy for responding to the coronavirus pandemic – in a format that aligns with our broader strategy. We cannot set activity by calendar month, as we simply don’t know what each month will look like. Instead, activity is set against the various crisis phases and may change depending on the time allowing in each phase.

Where possible (and appropriate), we’re conscious of putting the word crisis behind us and evolving to opportunity.
### STRATEGY ON A PAGE*

#### Crisis

**1. Disruption**
**Summary**
- Govt. gradually announces market restrictions.
- Frequent and fast-moving bad news.
- Gradual wind-down of industry, with lots of questions/concern for operators.
- Release of industry support packages, causing confusion, but also hope.
- Media saturation on crisis and plight of industry.
- Removal of all leisure travelers from Tas.

**Marketing**
- Minimal Activity – keeping the dream alive with some tone-appropriate activity via social media.

**Role of WxNW strategic pillars**
- **Advocacy**: Daily teleconference with State Govt. to inform decision-making with regional feedback on crisis; facilitate motorhome evacuation; and media responses.
- **Industry Development**: Sustained contact with operators across the region (proactive + reactive) to offer support and gather feedback.
- **Product Development**: Limited activity.
- **Marketing**: Limited activity.

**Emotion: Distress**
- Livingroom Escapism – content with high visual appeal, good news stories, innovative ideas and memories of past travel.

**2. Lock Down**
**Summary**
- Total shutdown of tourism industry and market.
- Focus on operator wellbeing – mental and financial.
- Emerging excitement/optimism about restrictions being lifted.
- Industry development and camaraderie through staying in touch.
- Product development/enhancement, ‘remain active’.
- Media fatigue, switching to focus on good news.

**Marketing**
- Advocacy: Bi-daily teleconference with State Govt. to inform decision-making with regional feedback on crisis; represent regional interests in planning for Tas marketing relaunch and T21 evolution.
- **Industry Development**: Continued contact with operators across the region and facilitation of industry forums via Virtual Café sessions, etc.
- **Product Development**: Mentoring sessions with operators to review current operations and/or development of new products.
- **Marketing**: Aspirational content via social media (via Visit Cradle Coast and DiscoverTas); and strategic review of the Visit Cradle Coast brand and website.

**Emotion: Uncertainty**
- Reemergence – encourage Tasmanians to reconnect by experiencing their home-state; supporting an industry that’s taken a hit to protect the health of Tasmanians.

**3. Intrastate Activation**
**Summary**
- Restrictions on local activity lifted, perhaps with more deliberate/controlled sequence than phase 1.
- Industry seek fast and strong response to stimulate demand. Flurry of market/operator activity to activate intrastate market.
- Public good-will towards industry. Good news stories.
- General industry sentiment shift form survival to hope/recovery.

**Marketing**
- Advocacy: Weekly teleconference with State Govt. to inform decision-making with regional feedback on crisis; continued discussions on evolving T21 strategy to support our region; and speaking engagements to convey industry story/sentiment to broader community.
- **Industry Development**: Continued contact with operators, virtual Relaunch seminars; renewed familiy program; and continued education sessions.
- **Product Development**: Assist with and advise on the launch of new/renewed product offerings.
- **Marketing**: The role of RTOs and local groups will be to stimulate conversion activity (packages, itineraries, etc.) on the back of TTas awareness campaign encouraging Tasmanians to explore their home-state.

**Emotion: Hope**
- Action Time – vigorous campaign activity, with review of new market conditions/opportunities and care to avoid ‘race to the bottom’ through panic discounting.

**4. New Normal**
**Summary**
- Restrictions on interstate and international travel lifted. Overwhelming likelihood the international market will take much longer to return (1-2 years).
- Industry celebrations about being open for business.
- Expect community debate about when to ‘lower the drawbridge’ and resume interstate visitor activity.
- Operators entering an uncertain market. Likely that global travel response will be slow – those relying on international market requiring continued support.

**Marketing**
- Deployment of new marketing strategy, as devised in collaboration with TTas and RTOs during downtime, with acute focus on repairing the destination brand (North-West brand damaged by virus outbreak?).
- There are likely to be some significant changes in market behavior, so understanding these and capitalising on new opportunities will be crucial.

**Emotion: Relief / Caution**

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*I know what you’re thinking, ‘it’s easy to fit a strategy on a page when using size 8 font’. Oh well, better grab your reading glasses!
OUTLINE OF KEY PROJECTS

Advocacy

1. **State Govt. Teleconferences**: We have participated in regular teleconferences (daily during phase 1 and every second day since phase 2) with the tourism industry stakeholders listed below. This has proven to be a critical forum for clarifying and interpreting govt. directives, providing direct feedback from tourism operators and evolving a response strategy as a statewide industry unit.

   - 4 x RTOs
   - Tourism Tasmania
   - Department of State Growth
   - Tasmanian Parks + Wildlife Service
   - Tourism Industry Council Tasmania
   - Tasmanian Hospitality Association
   - Department of Premier and Cabinet

2. **Motorhome Evacuation**: During phase 1 of the crisis, our industry had the unpleasant task of identifying any non-essential travelers and actively encouraging them to leave the State as soon as possible. This was a highly emotive process, putting many of our operators on the frontline. We assisted by clarifying govt. directives to accom. providers, (caravan parks in particular), gathering detail on visitor departure dates and liaising with TT-Line who increased sailings to meet demand. Ahead lays a job to try and reverse any damage done to that sector.

3. **News Media**: To date, the media have been vital in relaying crisis-related messages to the public. We have played a role here, by responding to media enquiries as a voice for the region’s tourism industry, but also proactively seeking the assistance of media to deliver key messages. As we move into the recovery phases, there will be more work to do in sharing good-news stories and encouraging Tasmanians to travel again.

Business Development

1. **Operator Support**: Much time has been spent speaking with operators, via phone, email and Zoom. We’ve been eager to understand their financial and mental wellbeing and to offer support however we can. As we move through phases 2 and 3, contact remains important as we educate, share information and eventually relaunch into a relatively unknown economic environment.

2. **Virtual Café Sessions**: We have conducted industry forums via the Zoom teleconferencing platform, providing an opportunity to connect with industry and deliver updates/insight via guest speakers. It’s also provided an opportunity for industry to connect with each other during a time of isolation. Given the success of these sessions to date, we’ll certainly continue to offer them post-crisis, along with other networking, mentoring and consultation sessions via the Zoom platform.

3. **Tassie’s Top Tourist Towns**: This is one of the few statewide tourism industry initiatives to proceed despite the lockdown (thanks TICT). Therefore, we’ll continue to work with entrants from our region to develop submissions and hopefully take out the big prize (which may serve as a useful destination marketing hook during relaunch).

Above, only 3 x projects are listed per strategic pillar. Click [HERE](#) to view the full list of potential response projects, which continues to evolve.
OUTLINE OF KEY PROJECTS

Product Development

1. Business Review: Conduct sessions with tourism operators to review their business and potentially rethink certain elements to align with market relaunch.

2. Drive Journeys Project: Continue working with Tourism Tasmania and State Growth on the next Drive Journey to be developed, which will span the top section of the State. This will require stakeholder engagement and creative development, with a view to launching the new journey as travel restrictions are lifted.

3. New Product: Work with the operators and entrepreneurs who are using this downtime to develop new product offerings across our region. Aligning their completion with the relaunch of our industry will be an objective, to maximise new and exciting travel-triggers when travel restrictions are lifted.

Marketing + Events

1. Intrastate Marketing Campaign: We are working with Tourism Tasmania and the other RTOs on an integrated marketing campaign, targeting the intrastate market. The campaign will be launched when enough restrictions have been lifted to support a sustained travel market (there is danger in launching too early). We anticipate a cluttered digital market with many businesses scrambling to relaunch at the same time, so Tourism Tasmania’s resourcing will be critical to achieve market cut-through and maximise clear/consistent messaging to consumers. As a region, we must then ensure this awareness translates to conversion with compelling offers, itineraries, etc. The campaign will be formulated in such a way that all operators can easily participate.

2. Brand + Website Review: We are using this downtime to seek advice on the relevance of Cradle Coast as a destination brand, in the eyes of our target market. There’s no doubt Cradle Coast is a powerful administrative brand unifying councils and industry, but we are seeking to understand how Cradle Coast reconciles with West Coast, King Island and North West Coast as destination names in the minds of our visitors. Also, we are working with Tourism Tasmania and the other RTOs to better understand the role of regional visitor websites within the broader Tasmanian visitor experience. Industry consultation will be undertaken before any decisions are made.

3. Cradle to Coast Tasting Trail: This powerful brand and visitor experience deserves our renewed attention, to refresh the concept, reignite the membership and generate visitor interest when travel restrictions are lifted. Therefore, we will use this downtime to work with the C2CTT committee on a list of next steps.

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