

Visit Northern Tasmania
Launceston Convention Facilities Demand Study
Executive Summary

RIGHT ANGLE

Executive Summary

Project Context

Northern Tasmania is home to a healthy events sector that spans the arts & culture, sports, agriculture, hospitality and business industries, among others. Events and festivals take place across diverse venues throughout the seven LGAs that make up Northern Tasmania.

In 2024, the Department of State Growth provided funding to Visit Northern Tasmania for the purpose of investigating opportunities for infrastructural support to the sector. Two parallel pieces of work were commissioned – a Northern Events & Festivals Infrastructure Strategy, that would provide recommendations across the region, and a Launceston Convention Facilities Demand Study, that would provide a data-informed analysis of the demand for business-focused events facilities in Launceston.

About this Document

This document was prepared by Right Angle, an urban innovation company working across Australia and with a dedicated office in Tasmania. Demand analysis was completed by GapMaps – experienced economists that specialise in turning data into action.

The Launceston Convention Facilities Demand Study was prepared as a priority for Visit Northern Tasmania, and as such, its findings will be central to developing further opportunities for Northern Tasmania's Events and Festivals Infrastructure Strategy.

Though wider Northern Tasmanian context has been considered, the subject area for the Convention Facilities study is limited to Launceston and its immediate surrounds - an area that spans the three municipalities of City of Launceston, West Tamar and Meander Valley.

Terms of Reference

Northern Tasmania

Northern Tasmania in the context of this work refers to the following seven LGAs that fall under the remit of Visit Northern Tasmania: City of Launceston, West Tamar, George Town, Meander Valley, Dorset, Northern Midlands, Flinders.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to both soft and hard infrastructure – transport, venue facilities, retail, AV, catering and administrative considerations are captured under the term.

Convention Facilities

All facilities, assets and resources that contribute to hosting a business event.

Business Event

Includes conferences/conventions, meetings and corporate incentive travel.

Objectives

1. Identify Launceston's niche business event market
2. Identify northern Tasmania's competitive advantage
3. Review the competitive environment across Tasmania and mainland Australia, both in capital cities, large regional cities and areas
4. Analyse relevant and recent recommendations for the conference facility space, ascertaining the baseline conditions at the time of the previous studies and what has changed in the market since
5. Audit and analyse physical business events facilities across the subject area of City of Launceston, West Tamar and Meander Valley LGAs
6. Produce a project-agnostic demand assessment report spanning all of Launceston and surrounding regions
7. Provide recommendations for convention facilities in Launceston.

Policy Objectives

Key Policy Documents

State

[2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, Tasmanian Government](#)

[Tasmanian Government Events Strategy 2023 - 2027](#)

[Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy](#)

[Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028, Business Events Tasmania](#)

Regional

[Greater Launceston Metropolitan Passenger Transport Plan](#)

[Cool Season Strategy 2024 - 2027, Visit Northern Tasmania](#)

[Destination Management Plan 2023, Visit Northern Tasmania](#)

[Northern Tasmania Sports Facility Plan 2023, NTDC](#)

[Greater Launceston Plan 2014 \(update currently in draft\)](#)

Local

[Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024, City of Launceston](#)

[Launceston Transport Strategy 2020 - 2040, City of Launceston](#)

[Economic Development Strategy 2022 - 2026, City of Launceston](#)

[Tourism Plan 2019 - 2022, City of Launceston](#)

[Strategic Plan 2022 - 2032, West Tamar Council](#)

[West Tamar Growth Strategy, West Tamar Council \(in consultation\)](#)

[Community Strategic plan 2020 - 2030, George Town Council](#)

[George Town Events Strategy 2018 - 2023, George Town Council](#)

[Community Strategic Plan 2024 - 2034, Meander Valley Council](#)

[Strategic Plan 2021 - 2027, Northern Midlands Council](#)

[Economic Development Strategy 2024, Northern Midlands Council](#)

[Dorset Council Strategic Plan 2023 - 2032, Dorset Council](#)

[2021 - 2031 Strategic Plan, Flinders Council](#)

Business events contribute to desired economic and social outcomes and the sustainable growth of the events landscape in Northern Tasmania is supported by policy objectives of both local and State government.



Place & Planning Policy

Without simple and accessible key infrastructure at hand, both visitors and locals will likely experience friction while exploring the area. Making a thorough bid to rehabilitate foundations like transport networks, visitor services, accommodation options and facilities means residents and tourists feel invited in, both in the revitalised Launceston City Heart and across the region.



Environment & Sustainability Policy

By prioritising the protection of the area's natural environment, reducing unnecessary impacts of events, and looking to attract visitors who grow value over volume, the growth seen in tourism to Northern Tasmania can be enduring and environmentally sustainable.



Prosperity & Economic Policy

To support targets set by local government to create new jobs and increase wages, strategies employed should see new and existing events being bolstered, visitor growth supporting new business and infrastructure, and should bear in mind the area's needs in off-peak seasons.



People & Social Policy

Efforts to reshape this region should continually improve the liveability and quality of life of the community, recognising its strengths – gastronomy, agri-tourism, heritage, nature – and supporting events and festivals that celebrate those strengths and promote inclusion and equity.

Insights & Implications

Overview

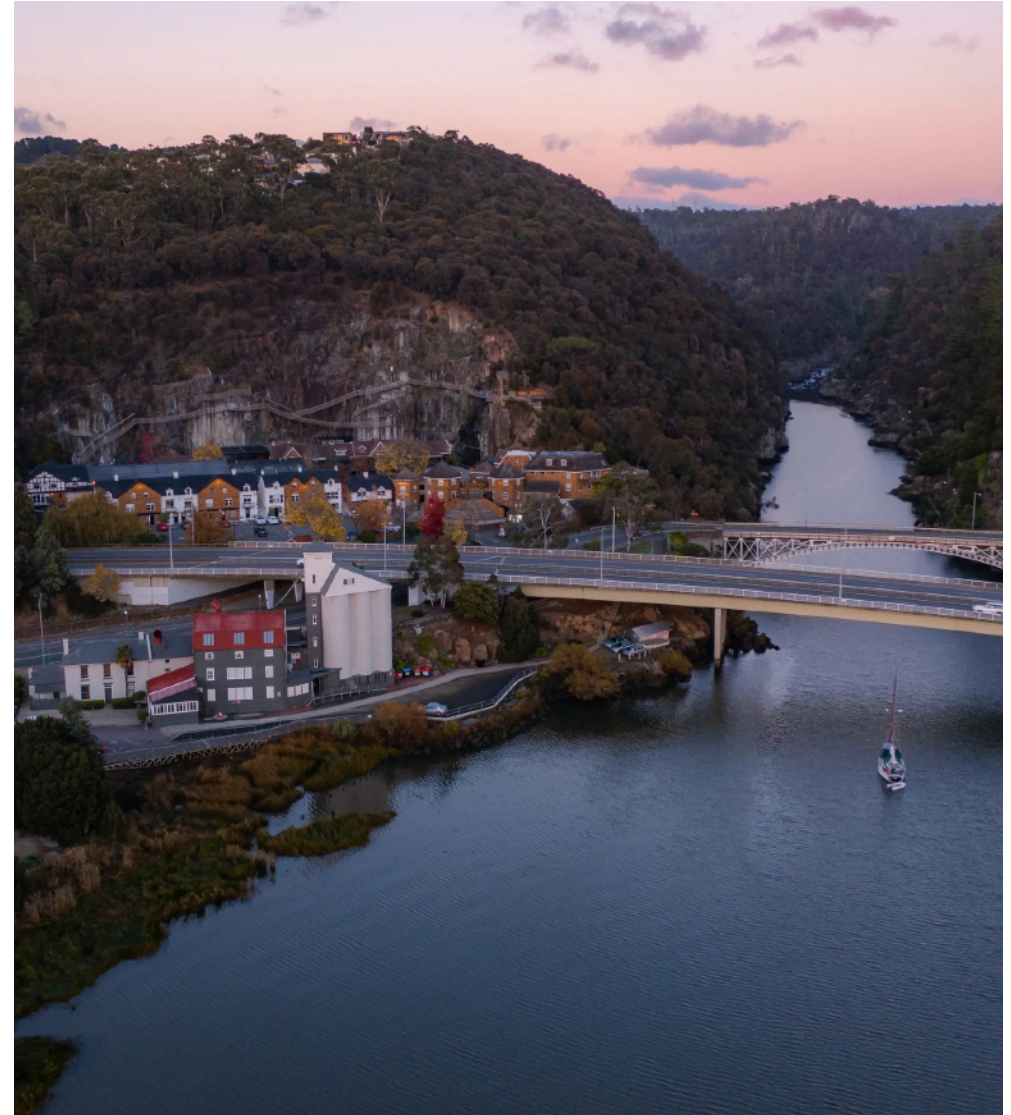
Launceston has seen a significant decrease in its market share of business events post-COVID, while the state overall has seen a net increase.

This loss of market share can be attributed to a confluence of causes. Some of this attrition is occurring for reasons beyond the control of local actors, like major investments in convention facilities in the wider regional market generating fiercer competition.

However, the majority of identified reasons that Launceston is losing market can be controlled by local decision-makers. These relate not only to the availability, size and quality of the venues that host to business events, but also to limitations stemming from current state of critical infrastructure: the volume of hotel stock, availability and timing of direct flights from capital cities and availability of ground transportation. The availability and timeliness of access to business events funding and incentives also contributes to a decline in market share.

The challenges identified are multifaceted, which means there's no singular response that can act as a silver bullet. Many of the recommendations made in this study hinge on collaborative, co-ordinated and cohesive actions made in partnership between government, industry bodies and the private sector, simultaneously and on multiple fronts.

Kings Bridge, Cataract Gorge Reserve →
One of Launceston's key strengths as a business event destination is its proximity to distinct regional tourism experiences.



Insights & Implications Summary

1

Hotel Shortage

Insight: With 1500–1600 hotel rooms in the city, Launceston experiences regular bottlenecks in its stock supply.

Implication: Multiple events cannot run simultaneously during peak season. Government can facilitate and incentivise faster private sector response to this demand.

2

Regional Competition

Insight: Other Australian regional destinations have become more competitive than Launceston.

Implication: Attracting business events is more difficult than ever and investment is needed for Launceston to remain competitive.

3

Intra-State Competition

Insight: Hobart attracts a few large (500+) business events annually.

Implication: It remains challenging to attract large business events to Tasmania, but venue, hotel and transport infrastructure favours the south and investment in these has led to net growth in events for Hobart.

4

Accessibility

Insight: A lack of routes and desirable flight times impacts Launceston's viability to host business events.

Implication: Launceston is unlikely to challenge within the broader APAC region without more direct flights at desirable times. Negotiations for these require demonstration of increases in capacity in other essential infrastructure like hotel stock.

5

Growth Markets

Insight: Future growth will come mainly from the 200–300 delegate event market, but attracting events between 300–500 delegates would be desirable for Launceston.

Implication: This would require a scaling up of enabling infrastructure as well as convention facilities that can comfortably host 500–550 delegates in various configurations.

6

Multi-Purpose

Insight: There is not the market to support the development of a new large-format facility that solely caters to business events in Launceston.

Implication: Should a new facility be developed, a multi-purpose facility that can host a range of other events as well business events is recommended as it will be more commercially and operationally viable.

7

Diversity of Venues

Insight: Though a purpose-built new facility can serve as a significant catalyst for growth, Launceston needs multiple suitable venue options to be competitive in the market.

Implication: Upgrades to existing venues alongside any new facilities are essential to Launceston's market growth.

8

Supporting Infrastructure

Insight: The business events market in Launceston is limited by the availability of critical suppliers of equipment and services like catering and audio-visual.

Implication: Investment in venues needs to be accompanied by investment in ancillary/supporting facilities.

Scenario Mapping

Summary

Three plausible scenarios were developed as a result of data analysis.

1. Do nothing

This scenario assumes:

- minimal additional hotel stock (possibly one hotel, but without dedicated convention facilities)
- organic growth in the number of passengers/ flights to Launceston Airport
- the same level of servicing capabilities
- the completion any improvements underway for existing infrastructure, but no major addition to convention facilities capacity within Launceston.

Outcomes

With limited intervention, the business events market in Launceston is estimated to grow marginally, returning to levels pre-Covid to around 20 events p.a..

Actions Required

- ▶ Refine and adjust current strategy to attract more events that can be hosted within existing facilities

2. Upgrades to existing facilities

This scenario builds on Scenario 1 and also assumes:

- the completion of any underway improvements
- other existing facilities are modernised/improved
- improvements in servicing capabilities
- a noticeable increase in flights to Launceston Airport (above baseline organic growth)
- two or more hotels are developed within the Launceston CBD and at least one of these includes convention facilities with a ~500 delegate capacity.

Outcomes

With some improvements to enabling infrastructure supporting services and convention facilities improvements/capacity increases, we assume the business events market could increase by about 35% to around 27 events p.a.

Actions Required

- ▶ Focus public and private investment to improve key existing facilities
- ▶ Work with airlines to attract new routes
- ▶ Redirect efforts to focus on attracting 200 –300 capacity business events
- ▶ Fast track hotel developments to introduce stock to market
- ▶ Improve supporting events services

3. New purpose-built convention facilities

This builds on Scenario 2, where in addition to all the assumptions defined in that scenario being met:

- the level of enabling infrastructure and services are greatly improved to sufficient levels to host a good number of medium sized events (~300–500 delegates) and potentially large events (500–1,000 delegates), noting there are two potential convention facilities size options we have modelled under this scenario.

Outcomes

With sufficient levels of enabling infrastructure and supporting services to host many ~300–500 delegate events and purpose-built convention facilities that could accommodate events up to 550 delegates, we estimate Launceston could capture about 40 business events p.a. (a doubling versus Scenario 1 and ~33% uplift versus Scenario 2).

Actions Required

- ▶ Secure funding and developer for a purpose-built facility
- ▶ Work with airlines to attract new routes
- ▶ Ensure incentive funding is sustained and remains competitive with other destinations
- ▶ Create a strong and competitive market for supporting events services

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