



COVID-19 RESPONSE

PREMIER'S ECONOMIC & SOCIAL
RECOVERY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Workshop 1
Agriculture & Food & Beverage

Introduction

We are living in uncertain times.

Looking ahead and planning for our future is more difficult than ever before.

Understanding the complex health, economic and social challenges Tasmania might face over the next five years requires new approaches and bold thinking. Faced with circumstances few of us imagined possible, we need to think differently and plan for multiple possibilities.

PESRAC has undertaken broad consultation, drawing on the knowledge and ideas of experts, business people, community leaders and everyday Tasmanians in planning for our future.

PESRAC has developed two potential future scenarios to get Tasmanians thinking. The scenarios are stories of how COVID-19 might play out over the next three years for use as a tool for creative thinking. They are not predictions, or expected outcomes. (Attachment 3 - the scenarios used in the workshops)

The scenarios were used as part of a process to gather ideas from Tasmanians about potential economic and social recovery strategies in the context of a very uncertain future.

This process involved nine workshops across the State to facilitate creative thinking around potential:

- consequences and constraints of COVID 19 over the next 3 years; and
- recovery opportunities that could be implemented and delivered within the next 5 years.

Workshop Participation

Peak bodies and networks were approached and asked to suggest people to participate in the workshop. They were asked to nominate people that have relevant expertise and knowledge, are creative thinkers, and do not normally have the ear of government.

The participants who attended this workshop are detailed in Attachment 4.

Key Purpose of Workshops

The participants were informed that the key purpose of the workshop was to identify potential recovery opportunities that could be implemented and delivered within the next 5 years by governments, businesses and the community - noting that recovery is a community responsibility not just a responsibility of governments.

Workshop Methodology

The workshops were held over a three hour period, and were based on a 'creative thinking' methodology developed by the University of Tasmania, referred to as "Stretch Thinking".

The methodology has been applied for considering COVID recovery in Western Australia and nationally, and in a range of disaster recovery and resilience applications by the public and private sectors. More information on the process is available on the PESRAC website.

Participants were provided with briefing information prior to the workshops to enable the workshops to quickly move into the "Stretch Thinking" process. A key foundational piece was the two scenarios (these are detailed in Attachment 3).

A facilitator guided groups of participants through the 'Stretch Thinking" process that involved identifying potential consequences, constraints, and opportunities associated with the two scenarios. Attachment 2 captures this discussion by participants during the workshop.

Having identified a range of potential opportunities under two scenarios, the groups of participants were asked to identify the 'best' or 'key' opportunities their workgroups identified, and these were presented to the whole workshop.

The last task was for all participants to individually identify which of the entire set of opportunities identified within the workshop were the 'best' opportunities (they were entitled to vote for as many opportunities as they liked).

Attachment 1 provides a summary of the key potential opportunities identified in the workshop. Those opportunities do not reflect the views of PESRAC or the Secretariat, rather, they give a 'sense of the room' from participants as to what opportunities are considered of a higher priority from all of those identified in the workshop.

Attachment 1: Summary of Key Recovery Opportunities

Build on our Competitive Advantage and Value Add

- Build on Tasmania's competitive advantage - particularly our water resources and fertile agricultural land. Encourage investment in land and water, and expand irrigation infrastructure to enable high value cropping opportunities.
- Prioritise value-add opportunities across agriculture, food and beverage, and explore opportunities for collaborative investment across industry in different parts of the value chain. Recognise that 'the industry' is not just the 'end commodity', rather, it is all of the factors of production 'from paddock to plate'. At the same time build on Tasmania's expertise (and competitive advantage and brand) in growing basic/essential food.
- Change the production model for agriculture to implement new production techniques and develop ways to increase productivity and mitigate against the potential labour shortages arising from COVID-19. One way of delivering this would be to invest in research and technology, for example by establishing a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for agri-tech in Tasmania (similar to the Blue Economy CRC). Build closer relationships between the University of Tasmania, industry and the Government to leverage the skills and knowledge that resides in Tasmania for the State's overall benefit.

Leverage Tasmanian Brand and Share Expertise to Diversify and Access New Markets

- Build the capacity of Brand Tasmania as it has the potential to play a larger and important role in creating awareness and stimulating demand for Tasmanian products/services (and telling stories - celebrating successes).
- Create a "Tasmanian Standard", which builds on Brand Tasmania and provides consumers of Tasmanian goods/services with clarity around a set of standards that certified/accredited Tasmanian organisations have met. It would enable organisations to receive accreditation if they meet a range of 'commitments' that relate to factors that align with Tasmania's Brand.
- Implement product traceability, which would help to build awareness and promote Tasmanian produce - as consumers are increasingly interested in product origin and the 'story behind the product'. This would build on Brand Tasmania initiatives.
- Improve understanding of market segmentation for Tasmanian products and services. This may help in the marketing of some premium products and 'repositioning' of other premium products.
- Establish an incubator development ('mind hub') with the aim of problem solving across sectors, reviewing value chains, and progressing business ideas/concepts; such as opportunities for process waste/recycling on-island.

- Improve, increase and expand inter-industry collaboration, with the aim of sharing market development intelligence and opportunities to support market diversification. Recognising potential competitive tensions within single market/sector, this might be best developed by working across sectors (eg. lessons and experiences, contacts and relationships gained in seafood market development being passed to fruit and vegetable exporters).
- Support businesses to diversify into new products/services in response to changing preferences and market demands - through information provision and mentoring. For example, information could be provided about changing market demands and preferences; and best practice, operation, marketing. This could help businesses adapt and pivot in an uncertain environment.

Bold Government Leadership - Difficult and Timely Decisions

- Continue bold government leadership - with less fear and effective partnering with industry. Continue the practices and behaviour that Government displayed during early COVID-19 experience. For example, government has provided practical help, assistance and programs to business/industry, and has not feared failure. There has also been an increased focus on working with industry to identify problems and develop and implement solutions collaboratively.
- Refocus Government's approach to compliance to be supportive (educational and facilitative) rather than punitive. During COVID-19 businesses received valuable support and guidance in relation to implementing relevant health/safety regulations (such as implementing COVID-19 safe plans) and this approach to compliance should continue across many regulatory portfolios.
- Review the conditions for lending through the Tasmanian Development Board (TDB) to reflect the unique situation created by COVID-19, and expand the amount of financing provided to Tasmanian businesses through TDB.

Skill Development and Job Promotion

- Promote awareness about job opportunities in the agriculture sector and develop a new labour model, based on a 'joined-up up' agriculture sector, in which a variety of seasonal/sector roles are packaged together to deliver a full-time 'job package'. A central employer could take on training and skills component, which could fill the gaps between the seasonal work.
- Identify skills/services that we currently import and skill-up locals to do those jobs, and/or attract specialist/expertise to relocate to Tasmania.
- Establish more flexible and changing delivery models for skills and training - better meeting the reality of the business world. Increase the capacity of people from industry to deliver training.
- Introduce low cost/no cost training opportunities for young people or displaced workers to replace the lost skills from outward migration.

Attachment 2: Outcomes from the Workshop

Scenario A

Workshop discussion about 'consequences' of scenario A

- Increased awareness of Tasmania as a 'safe' location, and increased demand for some of our produce - with potentially new markets developed which could lead to economic/agricultural sector growth. However, export markets may be challenging for some products/businesses, particularly if product markets are flooded and commodity prices drop, which in turn can have implications for farm performance and profits.
- Increased awareness of need for diversification, noting there is a question about which sectors will be successful in diversification.
- If recovery is too swift, we might not learn and 'lock-in' the lessons offered from the pandemic and revert to the 'old ways'.
- Regional production and biosecurity awareness has heightened, which will be a good thing.
- Increased intensification of agricultural opportunities will generate issues for land use – land will be sought after and there will strong competition for the resource.
- Wholesale and retail distribution networks may come under financial pressure with reduced demand for products (due to business closure and changing expenditure patterns). This network is vital link between farmers and retail. Many small Tasmanian businesses will suffer if they struggle to access such networks.
- A decrease in discretionary expenditure will impact on many small Tasmanian businesses, particularly those with a focus on the boutique, high quality products/services.
- The demand for some products are likely to increase (for example, the demand for potatoes has peaked in the first half of 2020), and businesses may find it difficult to ramp up and respond to this opportunity because of the uncertain future.
- Meeting the demands of increased visitors could present medium term challenges, particularly in context of Tasmania potentially going through a period of increased unemployment (and hence loss of skills) and reduction in services/tourism experiences due to potential business closures. This potential mismatch between demand and supply could create reputational damage.
- Agricultural production could decrease if supply chain disruptions have a material impact on essential inputs, such as pesticides.
- Reduced government expenditure may impact on the support and assistance provided to the agricultural, food and beverage sector.

- COVID-19 may drive people into training and skills as an interim opportunity if work is hard to find. This could lead to a general rise in the 'quality' of the labour market, and may lead to new agility, with momentum built up.
- Heightened competitive tension for skilled labour if we (once again) have a strongly performing economy.
- People left behind in regional places - risk the focus will be again on the cities and urban areas.
- Health system under serious strain will result in longer-term health issues.
- Costs of basics higher as production costs higher, freight, scale issues – may be absorbed at the moment, will have to be passed on.
- Thin/weak markets already evident (e.g. abattoir) to process agriculture, and failure of some of these facilities is a structural weakness for the State.

Workshop discussion about 'constraints' of scenario A

- Inability of the Government to respond rapidly. Legislative framework old, few strategic plans, and a lack of data. Risk averse nature of Government, means they are unwilling or unable to make key decisions for fear of creating disenfranchised cohorts.
- Government financial resources – government's resources unlikely to match the opportunity that might be available, but some government assistance will be needed. There is a lack of public servants to do the work required of Government.
- Processes and systems inside of Government means progress is too slow. Policy/Legislative frameworks may also constrain business responsiveness (for example, inflexible labour markets).
- Infrastructure to support development – lead times and access to capital and materials may mean that the required infrastructure lags the demand for it.
- Research to lead the game in productivity in agricultural sector.
- Over-reliance of Government to solve problems, Tasmania may be constrained by a mind-set that "it's the Government's job to...". If an alternative approach was taken that industry or the community could/should drive things, slowness, process and bureaucracy can be avoided.
- Business confidence may be down after several tough years, which is likely to constrain business investment, broadly. In addition, the ability to find new markets may become more difficult.
- Low motivation of business owners/operators, after several tough years, and in context of a very uncertain future may constrain business planning and growth strategy development.

- Skills needed now, but there is a lag in the development of skilled labour. This is common across industries - it takes 4 years to deliver a qualified electrician or plumber - similar timeframes exist for other occupation classes.
- Availability of trainers to deliver training - increasing regulatory burden means that it increasingly hard for 'industry' people to be able to deliver training. Seen as a lot of 'red tape', because achieving a 'teaching/training qualification' doesn't mean that you are necessarily a good industry-trainer, and the absence of such a qualification doesn't mean that you are not a good trainer. Industry people are not (sufficiently) interested in 'earning' the teaching qualification, but would otherwise be happy to be part of the industry-based training system, but are now prevented from doing so.
- Willingness of Tasmanians to participate in available labour markets. Some parts of the community consider that certain jobs/activities are 'below them'. Some of this is related to the incentives/structure of labour market programs and income support, but a lot of it has to do with community perceptions about 'the value/worthiness' of some roles/sectors. Another factor is the reputation and job quality of some sectors (eg. isolated cases of ill-treatment of employees tarnishes the reputation of whole sectors).
- Digital divide has become more obvious through COVID-19 period. It certainly exists, and it is a constraint for regional Tasmania.
- Early COVID-19 response was delivered with a bi-partisan approach. The focus finally became on Tasmanians and what they need, not the politicians, and how they can fight amongst themselves to get ahead. With a good recovery path, the likely erosion of bipartisan will mean the focus once again returns to politicians, rather than meeting the basic needs of Tasmanians.

Workshop discussion about 'opportunities' of scenario A

- Improve, increase and expand inter-industry collaboration, with the aim of sharing market development intelligence and opportunities, which could help to support market diversification. For example, better collaboration between the berry sector and salmon sharing intelligence and understanding (as these are not competing).
- Develop a team within Government to drive export development, perhaps building on the Brand Tasmania statutory authority. As this is not core 'Government', perhaps it can better 'operate outside square' than if this activity were undertaken by a government department. The mandate would be to work with Tasmanian sectors to get things ready for export, in a joined-up manner, as well as to open new markets for Tasmania. It could also have a mandate to work on supply chain issues in an integrated, cross industry fashion.

- Industry participants to join up and present its needs to Government, rather than a sector by sector approach. It could resolve some of its internal priorities and present a clearer refined needs analysis to Government (perhaps reducing, from the Government's perspective, some of the challenges and trade-offs that Government itself finds hard to grapple with).
- Use a cluster approach to review value chains and develop ideas - similar to Iceland fishing sector. The concept is to 'map' all sectors that relate to an industry sector (through the value chain) and create integrated clusters to achieve a scale and integrated approach to development - getting all of the relevant players around the table.
- Consider selling or leasing land for agriculture – there will be opportunities arising. Is there a need to consider the planning perspective/constraints to better position this opportunity ahead of time?
- Find unused spaces in local communities and use them for value-add processing and manufacturing.
- Invest in airfreight – led by industry, facilitated through government
- Develop a sustainability certification to provide evidence for our 'clean green' brand. Sustainability will be a factor in driving market demand and opportunity, as long as it can be authenticated.
- Eat Healthy Campaign. A successful campaign could assist in increasing food production and also physical and mental health.
- Support Brand Tasmania. Brand Tasmania has an important role to play in creating awareness and stimulating demand for Tasmanian products/services (and telling stories - celebrating successes). Brand Tasmania needs appropriate funding and resourcing to deliver on its potential valuable work program.
- Support businesses to diversify into new products/services in response to changing preferences and market demands - through information provision and mentoring. For example, information could be provided about changing market demands and preferences; and best practice, operation, marketing. This could help businesses adapt and pivot in an uncertain environment.
- Build on Tasmania's competitive advantage of plenty of water and fertile agricultural land. Encourage investment in land and water. Expand irrigation infrastructure to enable high value cropping opportunities.
- Continue bold government leadership - with less fear and effective partnering with industry. Continue the practices and behaviour that Government displayed during early COVID-19 experience. For example, government has provided practical help, assistance and programs to business/industry, and has not feared failure. There has also been an increased focus on working with industry to identify problems and develop and implement solutions collaboratively. This approach needs to continue.

- Develop a new labour model, based on a ‘joined-up up’ agriculture sector, in which a variety of seasonal/sector roles are packaged together to deliver a full-time ‘job package’. If the framework was based on a similar concept to labour-hire, the individual would have a single employer for a full time (or near full time) job, with the labour-hire firm making the individual available to the sectors as the work was available. This could be led by industry, rather than government. The central employer could also take on training and skills component, which could also fill the gaps between the seasonal work. This could be developed into a ‘rural apprentice’ type model, where the worker would emerge from a structured program with a ‘skills passport’, documenting a package of rural-related competencies gained through this form of employment.
- Change in the production model - invest in research and technology to shift away from seasonal labour-intensive work (e.g. picking). Undertake research and development in Tasmania, and build an industry from it in manufacturing and improving the technology. Is there scope to take this to ‘the next level’ and form a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for agri-tech in Tasmania - (similar to the Blue Economy CRC).

Scenario B

Workshop discussion about ‘consequences’ of scenario B

- There will be less agricultural output coming from Tasmania, and the sector will be resized. Concerns about getting product off island because of declines in international activity and reduce demand for niche and quality products (to which our ‘brand’ is attached) and a reversion to volume, scale and low cost.
- Increased freight costs will make exporting very difficult. Export levels are likely to be low.
- More protectionism limiting access to markets - potentially in Australia between states. But more likely between nations - they will all be looking to ‘support their own’.
- People will be locally-focused and spending more time at home. More entrenched ‘localisation’.
- Will be harder to find the capital to invest in the agriculture sector, because the overall environment is risk averse.
- COVID-safe restrictions and sickness lowering productivity and higher cost structures – keeping people safe will have to remain a feature of the workplace.
- Direct-to-consumer sales avenues will likely increase - on-line sales connecting producers with the end customer (some of this was already seen in the early COVID-19 period - e.g. wineries connecting directly with customers, rather than through distributors/liquor outlets).
- People and business resilience severely depleted – second and third round will be ‘knock-outs’ to a much greater extent than in the first round.
- Under-utilised infrastructure.
- Education paths will be disrupted.
- Increased mental health issues across society. People could feel a loss of hope.
- Businesses will be in consolidation mode - limited investment and expansion.
- Limited discretionary expenditure. Low demand for non-essential items.
- Basic agriculture products in demand.
- Very low business confidence. Businesses will be reluctant to invest in human capital.
- Entrepreneurial spirit squashed, and hence business opportunities likely to be missed.
- People could be leaving Tasmania and there could be a shrinking pool of skilled labour.

Workshop discussion about ‘constraints’ of scenario B

- Income to government is likely to be very constrained due to low revenues and more demand, and the number of public servants could be fewer. As a result the Government’s capacity to get things done could be diminished, and there could be less money for industry support, yet the demands will be ever growing.
- Governments could struggle to deal with all competing demands.
- Difficulties associated with access to funding could result reduced private investment and expenditure.
- Research funding likely to be falling (from both government and industry) and there is likely to be increased barriers to collaboration and networking due to travel restrictions.
- It will be harder to diversify into new export markets because you need to travel in person to build relationships and travel restrictions will make this impossible.
- Parochialism will increase - nationally and particularly internationally.
- Construction and infrastructure development may be limited due to a lack of skilled labour.
- A falling population means a return to the “brain-drain” – those that can leave for better opportunities will do so.
- Increased COVID-safe workplace requirements will constrain business operations.
- Insolvent trading laws may constrain businesses to operate in difficult times.
- Access to expertise/skills limited.
- International supply chains disrupted.

Workshop discussion about ‘opportunities’ of scenario B

- Reposition ‘premium’ products to service the local market. This may not deliver the same returns, but people need to eat, and there may be a stronger demand to ‘buy Tasmanian to support Tasmanians’. Even in this scenario, there will be ‘winners’ that have good incomes and increased income security. The opportunity is to identify them and get high-value produce to them to retain value.
- Adopt a government approach to regulation focused towards gearing Tasmania to chase opportunities – reducing ‘red tape’ to both to free up opportunities and to reduce the need to provide staffing to ensure compliance.
- Reform Local Government and the public service to be more efficient.
- Pursue opportunities for on-island red meat processing.
- Focus on collaborative investment across industry in different parts of the value chain which would become even more important.

- Develop an incubator / mind hub to encourage problem solving across sectors. How do you get 'the smart minds' together to more rapidly progress business ideas/concepts?
- Identify opportunities to process waste/recycling on-island. If it 'comes into Tassie, what are we doing with it' – audit and synergies across government. Data from audit can identify the scale opportunities.
- Gear up local manufacturing to replace imported products. Utilise and repurpose vacant space for new ideas.
- Review and revise a sensible balance between environment and economic objectives/laws.
- With many business forced to close or on the margin there could be opportunities for investors purchase cheap businesses.
- Explore value-add opportunities, including value-add for second grade products (for example producing carrot juice from second grade carrots).
- Build on Tasmania's expertise, competitive advantage and brand recognition in growing basic/essential food. Basic food will become a high proportion of household budgets as discretionary expenditure falls.
- Create a secure job and career paths for local seasonal workers, through:
 - Short courses - with an agile responsive training provider;
 - Promoting awareness about opportunities in the agriculture sector; and
 - Adjusting working conditions so the sector attractive to people.
- Identify skills/services that we currently import and skill-up locals to do those jobs, and/or attract specialist/expertise to relocate to Tasmania.
- Provide assistance to small local businesses to help them understand and put systems in place that will help them comply with certain operational, logistical, marketing, promotional requirements. For example, food manufacturing compliance is complex and difficult for same operators to understand and implement, which makes it challenging to start supplying large retail chains. A food compliance support team could help small businesses take the next step in distribution.
- Compliance approach needs to focus on being supportive not punitive. During COVID-19 businesses received lots of support and guidance in relation to implementing relevant health/safety regulations. For example, when implementing COVID-safe plans there was a compliance attitude/focus on assisting business understand and implement such plans, rather than punishing for not meeting health/safety requirements. This approach of supporting businesses understanding and complying with regulations needs to continue across many regulatory portfolios.

- Implement product traceability. This would help to build awareness and promote Tasmanian produce as consumers are increasingly interested in product origin and the 'story behind the product'. This would build on Brand Tasmania initiatives.
- Create a "Tasmanian Standard", which builds on Brand Tasmania and provides consumers of Tasmanian goods/services with clarity around a set of standards that certified/accredited Tasmanian organisations have met. The concept is simple and well established (e.g. better cotton initiative, organic certification, etc.). It would enable organisations to receive accreditation if they meet a range of 'commitments' that relate to factors that align with Tasmania's Brand, which could include for example - measures relating to renewable energy, carbon emissions, waste management, workforce, etc..
- Have government provide financing for Tasmanian businesses. This could be done through the TDB, but the conditions for lending may need to be reviewed and amended to reflect the unique situation created by COVID.
- Develop low cost/no cost training opportunities to develop young people or displaced workers to replace the lost skills from outward migration. May need to pay people to do it, rather than making them pay to do it.
- More flexible and changing delivery models for skills and training - better meeting the reality of the business world.
- Increase the capacity of people from industry to deliver training. Develop a different delivery model that allows industry experts to deliver training, not 'teachers'.
- Educate business owners in practical management/people/finance (something more applied and relevant and cost-effective than the Company Director's course). This would build resilience in the business.
- Incentivise skilled labour to reverse the brain drain.
- Better use Research and Development levies – consider national priorities versus local need. Deliver better value to local producers who are paying the levies but not getting the benefits.
- Campaign to see expat Tasmanians to buy Tasmanian – who was Tasmanian or associated with Tasmania and wants to reconnect with Tasmania?

Target migration – use Brand Tasmania to attract new people.

- Reconsider 'success and happiness' – economic growth and \$ not the only things, and consider mental health. There is an opportunity to value things differently and re-define happiness to focus on what Tasmania innately offers, particularly in a COVID-19 world.
- Embrace technology to deliver services, rather than face-to-face delivery models for medical services, training, and education.

- Enable volunteers/community-led initiatives to remove constraints and allow the community to support community.

Attachment 3: Scenarios Used in the Workshop for ‘Creative Thinking’

Scenario A (2020 to 2023)

A long lasting and effective vaccine has been developed, and broad distribution across the globe is varied. Large numbers of developed countries have access to the vaccine, and the uptake of vaccinations is particularly good in those countries that established manufacturing contracts early on. By contrast, some countries that were not able to get at the head of the que have had less success in rolling the vaccine out to their populations. Uptake has been widespread in Australia and other developed countries. By early 2022 a significant proportion of the Australian population was immunised and community transmission has largely been suppressed. Methods for treating COVID-19 have also improved, resulting in decreasing mortality and hospitalisation rates, and new fast, affordable, accurate and painless saliva tests that provide immediate results are widely available. Over the past few years many Australians chose to test regularly which improved the speed and effectiveness of tracing.

Small, localised, virus outbreaks continued to occur nationally during 2021 but were suppressed quickly with small-scale localised restrictions, without broad-scale lockdowns (as seen in Melbourne in September 2020). Physical distancing requirements are no longer required. State and Territory borders opened in early 2021 and Australia’s international borders opened around mid-2021. During 2021 to 2023 intermittent international travel restrictions applied to some countries and travellers that were considered to be high risk, however, these restrictions have now almost all been removed.

The global, national and Tasmanian economies have recovered after bottoming out in 2020-21. Tasmania is one of the best performing states, with people in the post-COVID-19 world demanding the safe and clean produce and a tourism experience that Tasmania has to offer. However the 2020-21 crisis resulted in structural changes in the economy and many businesses closed, particularly in sectors most impacted by COVID-19 suppression measures in 2020. Tasmania’s population is now growing again after a short period of decline through 2020-22. National and international passenger and freight services have returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. After a short period of reduced demand and supply disruptions, international demand Tasmanian products and services exports slowly increased to record high levels in 2023.

The Tasmanian community has recovered well from the pandemic. Community support for the COVID-19 response led to increased social connectedness, while advances in the use of technology, such as telehealth, have made services more accessible to some isolated cohorts. While the community has a high sense of hope for a Tasmania with plenty of opportunities, and the level of anxiety and fear associated with COVID-19 has largely disappeared, the pandemic has highlighted the struggles of people living with disadvantage, and particularly the long term unemployed.

As the economy recovered Governments have incrementally removed most of the COVID-19 support measures to businesses and households, but retained JobSeeker payments at a higher rate, recognising that the pre-COVID levels were unsustainable.

Scenario B (2020 to 2023)

After several false starts, a vaccine has been developed and was recently made available to Australians. However uptake has not been high due to ongoing social commentary around its overall effectiveness and whether it will provide long lasting immunity. Treatment methods have improved, but not to a point where they have reduced the desire for an effective vaccine. Testing technologies and tracing efforts have incrementally improved, and random testing is being conducted across the State on a large scale and regular basis. However, community commitment for suppression measures has reduced.

Globally countries continue to experience frequent outbreaks. Some countries have chosen to adopt a herd immunity management approach and have avoided a 'stop-start' economic recovery, other counties continue to struggle with the management of relatively high daily cases –nevertheless there is a general global sense of 'light at the end of the pandemic health crisis tunnel'. Without widespread uptake of an effective vaccine in Australia, the risks associated with international travel still exist and our international borders are effectively closed, other than to a small number of countries who's COVID-management approach (strong suppression) is similar to Australia's, with the first travel bubble opening to New Zealand in 2021. Governments around Australia continue to face difficult decisions around balancing public health and economic policies.

All State borders opened for a period of time in 2021, allowing some freedom of movement for domestic travel. However frequent and large outbreaks across the nation soon after, led to various States (including Tasmania) re-imposing tighter border controls. In 2023, travel restrictions continue to limit travel to hotspot regions and borders are closed to those without exemptions for several months. Physical distancing and restrictions around very large gatherings are still in place.

Economic conditions worldwide have not returned to pre-COVID levels. The global and Australian economies have entered into a prolonged period of 'drift' with a significant reduction in economic activity from pre-COVID levels characterised by no growth and sustained high unemployment. Tasmania's economic conditions are trending below the already weak national conditions -with an unemployment rate of around 12 per cent (more than double the pre COVID level) and youth and regional unemployment hit particularly hard. Industry sectors (such as Tourism) that are particularly affected by travel restrictions continue to struggle more than other sectors. Tasmanians are leaving the State in search for job opportunities, and the State's population has declined. National and international passenger and freight services have slightly improved but remain substantially below pre-COVID-19 levels. Freight costs are very high and capacity is unreliable. Many countries have

protectionist policies in place and international markets are difficult to access for many Tasmanian goods and services.

The economic crisis has resulted in decreases in Government revenue, and grants from the Australian Government have reduced for Tasmania. Governments feel under pressure to tighten and target expenditure (reduce some 'non-essential' services), and there is a growing acceptance that some support measures are creating distortions in the labour market. JobKeeper and JobSeeker supplements (and other support to businesses and supply chains), have either been revised, reduced and/or retargeted, and these reforms commenced with significant change occurring in 2021-22.

The inability for many Tasmanians to find sufficient work is leading to an increase in household stress and financial hardship, and more Tasmanians feeling isolated and disconnected (particularly young, old and disadvantaged Tasmanians). The Tasmanian community is very much feeling the social impacts of ongoing outbreaks of the virus and the ongoing impact of suppression measures in Tasmania. Students of all ages have also been impacted by frequent disruptions to their learning institutions, and the aged care sector in particular has faced ongoing unique challenges with the management of its work force and vulnerable clientele. Ongoing frustration and uncertainty has led to non-compliance with lockdown and social distancing requirements, and combined with the economic situation, is leading to increasing protests and unrest, a greater sense of fear and anxiety, and a loss of hope for a better future.

Attachment 4: Workshop Participants

Participant	Organisation
Chris de Bono	Meru Food
Rebecca Duffy	Holm Oak
Ruby Daly	Hellfire Bluff Distillery
Cameron Folder	Costa (Berry Category)
Sarah Hirst	Sarah Hirst Strategy
Jen Fry	TAS Salmon Growers Assoc.
Chris Condon	Launceston Distillery
Allison Clark	Optimum Standard
Amara Doyle	Agvista
Doris Blaesing	RMCG
Paul Richardson	Fisherman
Peter Cornish	Fruit Growers Tasmania
Mandy Richardson	Velstand