

Leading to a Brighter Future

**COVID-19: Challenges, innovations,
priorities and recovery for a new and
better normal in Tasmania**

**SUBMISSION TO THE PREMIER'S ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL RECOVERY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges, accelerated innovation and created an impetus for change to reset our vision to build a new and better normal for Tasmania while staying true to who we are.

COVID-19 has been disruptive and painful, however there is optimism about the recovery of industries and sectors as well as for the future of Tasmania.

This submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council is based on the insights of 105 members of the Tasmanian Leaders Network on COVID-19-related challenges, innovations and priorities for Tasmania's recovery. The submission is in line with the purpose of Tasmanian Leaders to build and sustain socio-economic vibrancy now and into the future through accelerated leadership capability and capacity. The Tasmanian Leaders Network consists of leaders across Tasmania in all sectors - Alumni, Champions and other leaders.

A summary of insights gained from the Network are:

Challenges. Responding to the pandemic has presented significant challenges including loss of, or reduced income; stress due to home schooling children while many parents were also concurrently adapting to working from home; maintaining safety and well-being of staff for those who are employers; looking out for the safety of family, friends and work colleagues; and managing personal, family and work uncertainty including the early isolation from family within Tasmania, and the continuing isolation from family and friends outside Tasmania. Four types of organisations were identified based on the challenges experienced in the early response phase including: Running Essential Services, Adapt to

Survive, Working from Home and Sudden Slow Down.

Lessons. Lessons learned from the impact of COVID-19 include the need to be agile; to lead based on values including being collaborative, open and understanding; ensuring good business planning and product diversification where possible; and being resilient, focused and prepared to change. These attributes will remain essential for the future of a new and better normal.

Innovation. COVID-19 has accelerated us into the future and changed the way we work: 80% of the Tasmanian Leaders Network consulted have innovated their processes, 75% are using technology differently and 50% have changed their approach to products, services, marketing and business models. For a new and better normal, these innovations need to be leveraged further, with innovation and purposeful risk-taking becoming the norm, and encouraged, even required, by the government and others.

Industry optimism. Members of the Tasmanian Leaders Network are optimistic about the recovery of their various industries and sectors. Their optimism stems from the increased community focus and the burgeoning culture of collaboration and connection, and increased demand for products and services including local produce and renewable energy.

Concerns. The Tasmanian Leaders Network is concerned about 'returning to the way it was', and the social and economic stress from the compound impact of reduced funding and the hardest hit industries.

Suggestions. Support for safe, affordable access to diversified markets, and any required business restructuring; consideration

of economic support beyond JobKeeper such as waged jobs supported by government across all sectors not just the government sector; a stronger education sector which results in schools, TAFE and UTAS focussing on our changing world and the future nature of work; briskly moving to be a leader in the digital world and harnessing the transformational potential of digital technology; moving beyond economic growth as the measure of Tasmania's future success and including other measures of socio-economic vibrancy and a thriving community.

Constraints and risks. These include weak political leadership characterised by a lack of vision, short-term planning, and an inability to rise above political tensions to look to and lead towards the future - 10 to 20 years and beyond; managing the balance between tourism and the protection and enhancement of our unique Tasmanian physical and social characteristics, while enhancing the hospitality sector for locals and visitors to one of uniform excellence; promoting and achieving equity and equality for all; and the inability to improve the education we provide to our children and young adults.

Optimism for Tasmania. More than 80% of Tasmanian Leaders Network surveyed are optimistic about Tasmania's future. The common theme around this optimism is the opportunity presented by COVID-19, however disruptive and painful, to reset the vision to build a new and better normal while staying true to who we are. The vision themes are: Tasmania as a world leader because it is socially, economically and environmentally vibrant; strongly locally grounded while being part of the international commercial and cultural world; leading in the digital economy as well as the generation and application of cutting edge thinking and research to achieve this.

The big picture

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges, accelerated innovation and created an impetus for change to reset our vision to build a new and better normal for Tasmania while staying true to who we are.

Essentials for the future of a new and better normal	Be agile.	Lead based on values including being collaborative, open and understanding.	Have good business planning and product diversification.	Be resilient, focused and prepared to change.
Optimism about the future of industry	Increased community focus.	Burgeoning culture of collaboration and connection.	Increased demand for products and services including for local food and renewable energy.	Leverage innovation.
We have concerns about the future	Returning to the way it was.	The social and economic stress from the compound impact of reduced funding and the hardest hit industries.	Lack of vision and short-term planning.	Impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and unsustainable practice.
And suggestions on addressing them	Support for safe and affordable access to diversified markets, and for any business restructuring required.	Consideration of economic support beyond JobKeeper.	A better and stronger education sector that is preparing Tasmanians for the future nature of work.	Move beyond economic growth and including other measures of socio-economic vibrancy and a thriving community.
We are optimistic about the future for Tasmania	To reset the vision.	Lead in the digital economy.	Build a new and better normal.	Stay true to who we are.

Leading to a Brighter Future

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“You have to ride with the volatility not react to it.”

Introduction

Tasmanian Leaders builds accelerated leadership capability and capacity to improve and sustain socio-economic vibrancy now and into the future.

The Tasmanian Leaders Network is an influential group of around 400 leaders across Tasmania from all sectors, including Alumni and Champions and other leaders.

Tasmanian Leaders surveyed members of the Network and conducted a range of 1:1 consultations (30 people) to capture insights and views on challenges, innovations and priorities for Tasmania with particular reference to the impact of, and opportunities arising from, the COVID-19 pandemic. These insights and views form this submission to the Premier’s Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council, to inform its thinking and deliberations. 105 responses to the survey were received between 13 July to 4 August 2020.

Table 1 shows the geographical distribution of survey respondents, which roughly mirrored Tasmania’s population distribution¹: 47% from the south (population 51%), 32% from the north (population 27%) and 18% from the north west (population 21%).

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by industry/ sector, which included Education & Training (12%), Health Care & Social Services (12%), Professional & Scientific Services (10%), Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (9%), Arts and Recreation (8%) and Other Services (18%).

Table 1. Location

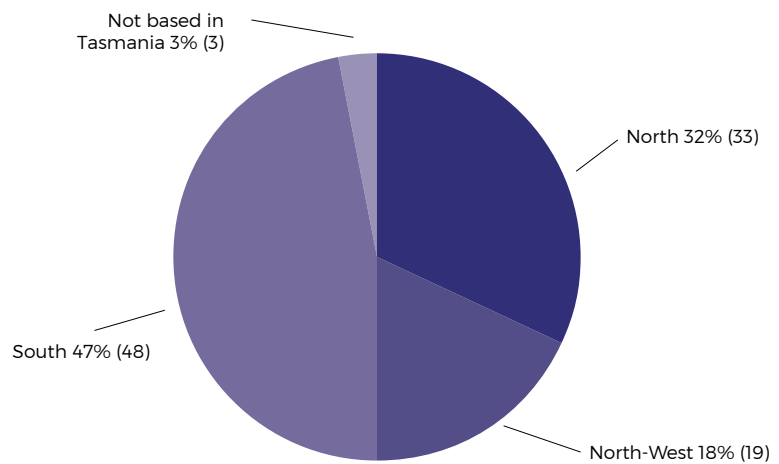
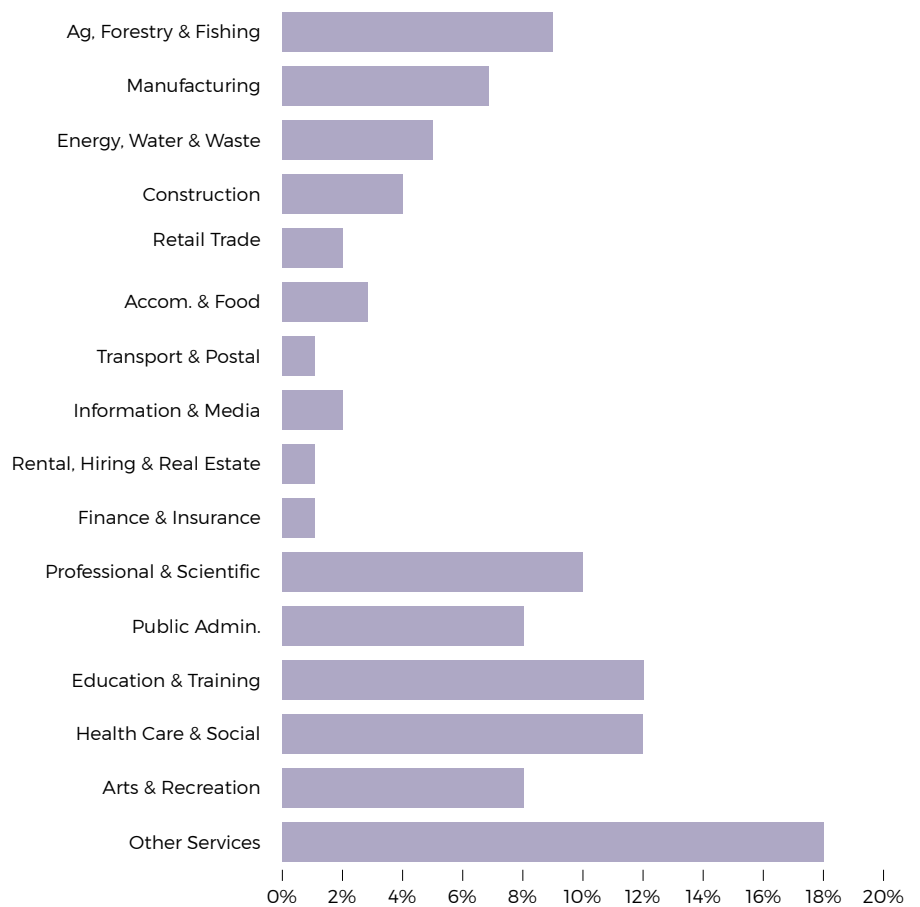


Table 2. Industry/Sector Distribution



¹ www.treasury.tas.gov.au/Documents/Regional-Population-Growth.pdf

A significant challenge

More than 80% of survey respondents found responding to COVID-19 was a significant challenge for their organisation.

Challenges included loss of, or reduced income; stress from home schooling children while many parents were also concurrently adapting to working from home; maintaining safety and well-being of staff for those who are employers; looking out for the safety of family, friends and work colleagues; and managing personal, family and work uncertainty including the early isolation from family within Tasmania, the continuing isolation from family and friends outside Tasmania, and not being able to have face-to-face contact with clients and customers, particularly for services.

Table 3. Responding to COVID-19 has been a significant challenge for my organisation

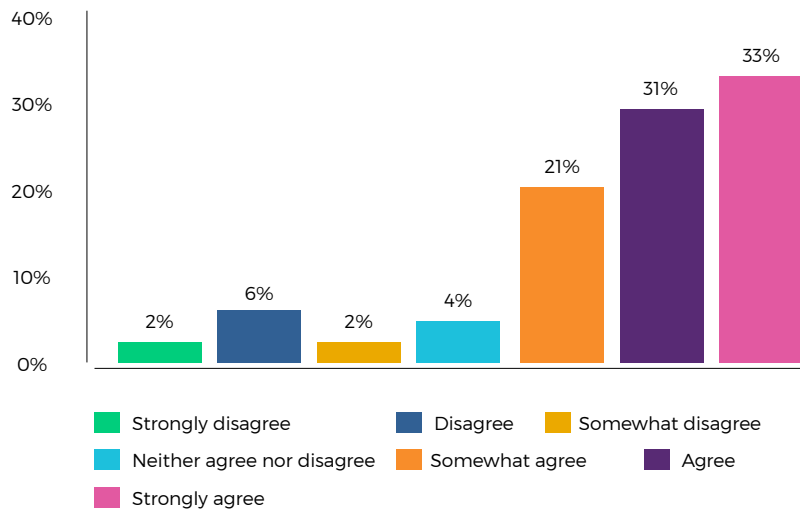


Table 4. Coronavirus Response: The Four Types of Organisations

1:1 consultations in April identified four types of organisations based on the challenges they face as a result of COVID-19. The ‘four types’ helped Tasmanian leaders understand how people are in different mindsets during the response phase of COVID-19.

Running Essential Services	Adapt to Survive	Working from Home – Secure Job	Sudden Slow Down
<p>Continuing on the job/ onsite</p> <p>Uncertainty in how long</p> <p>Want to avoid lockdown/ increased restrictions to keep teams employed</p> <p>Safety and staying trading</p> <p>Headspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoping for best, preparing for worst • Managing their team/ situation • Managing the here and now • 24 hr timelines • Trying to maintain employment 	<p>Rapid pivot - online, deliveries, new services and offerings</p> <p>Keep business afloat</p> <p>Capitalise on response packages – access to capital/loans/grants</p> <p>Do what they can now to prepare for “Go”</p> <p>Headspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to learn what others are doing what is working, what isn’t • Tips, lessons and assumptions • Upskilling: IT, social media and online 	<p>Shift focus to internal – projected funding flows</p> <p>Keeping everyone employed – reducing staff hours</p> <p>Compassionate leadership and truth telling</p> <p>Managing remote team – checking in on team needs, emotional support,</p> <p>Reality of working from home and finding balance</p> <p>Headspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing the situation • Know that it won’t be business as usual – what will it be? 	<p>Clients/contracts postponed or cancelled</p> <p>Suddenly low/no income</p> <p>Uncertainty moving forward</p> <p>Move to Jobkeeper</p> <p>Headspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recalibrate – Recover – Re-energise • Take time to step back • Understanding impacts – now and future • Connect and help community • Planning

The lessons

A selection of comments include:

Business “Our biggest challenge has been supporting our casual staff and maintaining enough incoming work to support our organisation financially, as our clients and partners have lost significant funding or have been subject to closures.”

Finances “Our previous income was 85% from interstate and international tourists. The challenge is navigating the financial future of our business with so many unknown factors.”

Staff “Protecting staff and participants with a geographically diverse workforce, disconnected and disengaged, low literacy and low digital literacy, mostly casual and working across multiple organisations.”

Tasmanian leaders have learnt valuable lessons responding to these changed circumstances.

Key themes include the need to be agile; to lead based on values including being collaborative, open and understanding; ensuring good business planning and product diversification where possible; and being resilient, focused and prepared to change. These attributes will remain essential for the future of a new and better normal.

A selection of comments includes:

Agility “You have to ride with the volatility not react to it.”

Values-based leadership “The strength of collaborative leadership during times of crisis.”

Diversification is key “Diversification and reducing reliance on singular international markets is very important.”

Be prepared “Have a contingency. It gives you the headspace to get creative if you can still pay the bills.”

Resilience “We are stronger than we thought and we need to focus more.”

Collaboration “Not seeing business next to you as a threat but a collaborator.”

Understanding and empathy “Genuine check-ins with each other in business and community and being considerate to how people’s businesses and lives have changed.”

“Diversification and reducing reliance on singular international markets is very important.”

Innovation from the disruption

COVID-19 has accelerated us into the future and changed the way we work: 80% of the Tasmanian Leaders Network consulted have innovated their processes, 75% are using technology differently and 50% have changed their approach to products, services, marketing and business models. Table 5 is the breakdown of responses on organisation innovation.

Innovation themes comprise new ways of delivering products including selling direct to customers, digital delivery including live concerts, takeaway, ordering apps and a shift to a fully online shopfront.

Using technology differently has also enabled:

Faster decision-making via virtual meetings

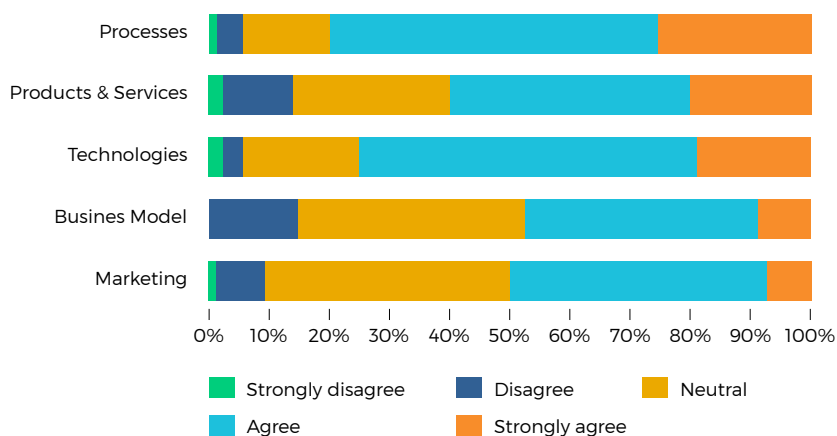
More flexible working at home conditions

Substantial steps toward learning how to use contemporary pedagogy

Greater reach to regional and remote areas

Entirely new services such as Telehealth

Table 5. In responding to COVID-19 my organisation innovated our:



“Expanding our manufacturing technology into new areas that will reduce our risk and grow our business.”

A selection of comments includes:

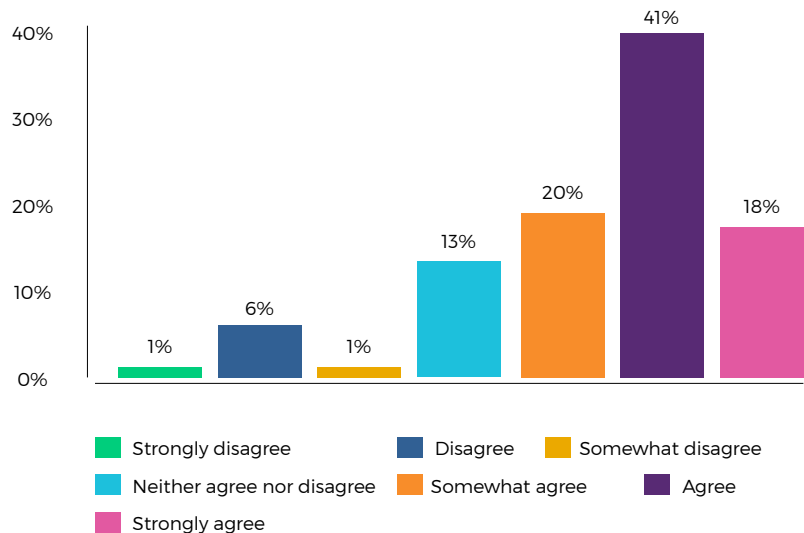
Create new ways for connecting “Using technology to open up Tasmania to the world and inviting people across the globe to engage with Tasmania.”

New ways of doing things “Expanding our manufacturing technology into new areas that will reduce our risk and grow our business.”

Industry optimism

Members of the Tasmanian Leaders Network are optimistic about the recovery of their various industries and sectors. Their optimism stems from the increased community focus and the burgeoning culture of collaboration and connection, and increased demand for products and services including for local food and renewable energy.

Table 6. When I think about the future of my industry sector, I am optimistic



A selection of comments includes:

Crisis creates a container for change “Never waste a good crisis! We have brought our food systems and supply chains to the front of everyone’s mind and can use this to create positive change.”

New opportunities “Empty supermarket shelves have woken people up to the need for strong local food systems and manufacturing.”

New products “The product we are developing will be long life, high quality and shelf stable which makes it a perfect product for transporting globally.”

Collaboration “Work collaboratively and with the community to design place-based solutions to the challenges our community faces.”

Continuity of positive impact “Arts and culture will continue to make a positive impact into the cultural fabric of Tasmania.”

“Arts and culture will continue to make a positive impact into the cultural fabric of Tasmania.”

Top concerns facing sectoral recovery in the long-term

Survey respondents are concerned about 'returning to the way it was', and the social and economic stress from the compound impact of reduced funding and the hardest hit industries.

Economic concerns

Recession.

Return to business as normal is a missed opportunity.

Global shocks to supply chains.

International markets and the impact on exchange rates, freight, transport, cost of goods.

Beyond JobKeeper.

Skilled workers and training.

Government funding, expenditure and impacts on contracts.

Socio-economic concerns

Recession compounding socio-economic divide.

Loss of international students in education.

Physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

Financial and social support to community members.

Uncertainty, lack of clear communication.

Disposable income/discretionary spending of individuals/community.

Environment and sustainability concerns

Threat of economic development at any cost.

Climate change and sustainability.

Food security and degraded environmental systems in agriculture to fisheries.

Losing sight of our uniqueness.

“Leadership culture seems more likely to lean into a ‘return to the way it was’ syndrome vs pushing the need to adapt to a new normal.”

A selection of comments includes:

Sustain proactivity “Lack of funding will mean that we will end up being reactive, rather than proactive in responding to the potential community harms.”

Leadership is key “Leadership culture seems more likely to lean into a ‘return to the way it was’ syndrome vs pushing the need to adapt to a new normal.”

Social cohesion stressors “Undoing social cohesion through stressors on childcare, family and sexual violence, mental health, use of alcohol and other drug matters.”

Industry sector recovery needs in the long-term

Suggestions have been made to help industry recover over the long-term these include: support for safe and affordable access to diversified markets, and for any business restructuring required; consideration of economic support beyond JobKeeper such as waged jobs supported by government across all sectors not just the government sector; a better and a stronger education sector which results in schools, TAFE and UTAS focussing on our changing world and the future nature of work; briskly moving to become a leader in the digital world and harnessing the transformational potential of digital technology; moving beyond economic growth as the measure of Tasmania's future success and including other measures of socio economic vibrancy and a thriving community.

“A new way of being in Tasmania that recognises that economic growth is but part of the equation of people finding ‘happiness, health and well-being.’”

A selection of comments includes:

Safe access to markets in ways that reduce the risk of future lock-downs.”

Diversified markets “Those businesses sustaining during this time are those who have diversified and who are not dependent on tourism alone.”

JobKeeper “To keep our sector going, the economy must be supported nationally allowing time for those businesses in trouble now to recover before (JobKeeper) support is pulled back.”

A thriving community and economy “A new way of being in Tasmania that recognises that economic growth is but part of the equation of people finding ‘happiness, health & well-being.’”

Concerns about Tasmania's recovery in the long-term

Tasmanian leaders have concerns over the State's long-term recovery. Common themes are around: leadership from performance of political leaders to ability to rise above tensions to shape our future, lack of vision and short-term planning, impacts of the downturn in tourism, hospitality and education and the negative effects this may have on social equity.

“We need to maintain our individuality, but retain our global perspective and not become introspective.”

A selection of comments against key themes is below.

Leadership

“The perceived necessity for growth and development at the expense of the environment and often disadvantaged communities.”

“We need to maintain our individuality, but retain our global perspective and not become introspective.”

“Short term thinking and lack of vision/planning.”

Build education

“1. Funding and opportunities to support schools with taking risks on new avenues of learning and professional development that helps empower teachers. 2. Time and resources to equip teachers and schools with the tools to reinvent learning and release them from the constraints of the curriculum. 3. Guidance and encouragement to help councils, community organisations and universities find ways to engage with schools to develop strong relationships for flexible transitions, rather than rigid pathways.”

“A stronger focus on TAFE and excellence in trades will be critical. UTAS becoming a boutique centre of global excellence in education, learning & research.”

Impacts of downturn

“Our heavy reliance on national and international tourism and our already existing high unemployment and welfare dependence, combined with our low value on education, has only been exacerbated by this time. I worry that in the scramble and rush to recover the focus may fall to the wrong areas, which could reaffirm our existing weaknesses, rather than addressing them.”

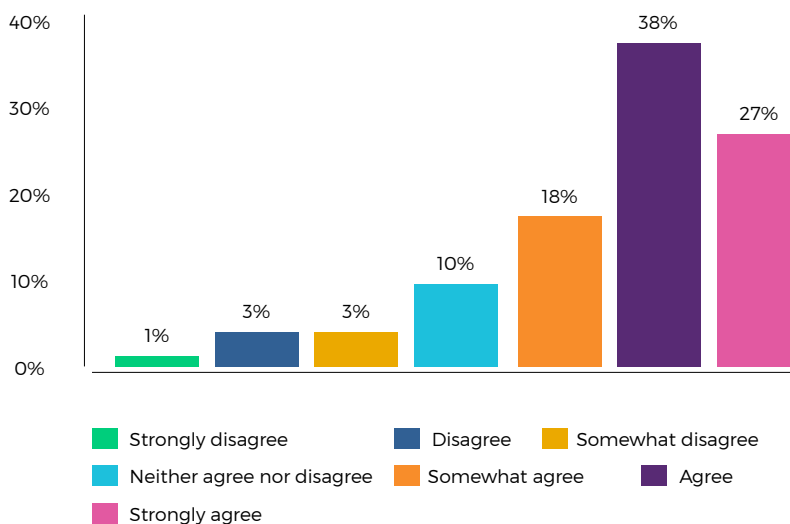
Growing inequalities and vulnerabilities

“The silos in Tassie are quite distinct between the HAVES and the HAVE NOTS. I am deeply worried about those on the margins who will have lost so much momentum, it's difficult to find incentive and begin again.”

Optimism about Tasmania's future

More than 80% of Tasmanian Leaders are optimistic about Tasmania's future. The common theme around this optimism is the opportunity presented by COVID-19, however disruptive and painful, to reset the vision to build a new and better normal while staying true to who we are. The vision themes are Tasmania as a world leader because it is socially, economically and environmentally vibrant; strongly locally grounded while being part of the international commercial and cultural world; leading in the digital economy as well as the generation and application of cutting edge thinking and research to achieve this.

Table 7. When I think about the future of Tasmania, I am optimistic



A selection of comments against key themes are below.

Support local

"I feel like the state is pulling together and is supporting local business."

Stay true to who we are

"A re-focusing of priorities to appreciate what we have in this state, a desire to promote local industries, a willingness to embrace rapid change and try new ways of doing things."

Transitioning to a sustainable future

"We use the opportunity to do long-term future planning for Tasmania rather than rush out short term infrastructure projects and more urban sprawl. e.g. how to create sustainable cities for the future Tasmania we want to live in."

"Fulfilling our clean green promise and being an epicentre for green energy, sustainable agribusiness and agrifood, becoming a carbon sink for the planet...will help the planet and attract investment dollars too."

"People will better appreciate the importance of their natural environment. Community will be more connected and caring. Resurrection of small-scale manufacturing industry. More Tasmanians will invest or re-engage in education. Stronger business co-operation and referral networks. Surge in innovation within business."

Socially inclusive

"We can build a more sustainable, more inclusive, more collaborative model."

"Greater investment from Tasmanians in Tasmania."

Leading in digital economy

"The focus on digitally-based markets could help Tasmania substantially. Information flows without needing people to move about, so if we can become a bigger exporter of ideas – remote workers, research, etc. – then we certainly stand to benefit."

"A reputation as a safe and well-run society will attract high-performing industries and individuals to choose to live in Tasmania, exploiting the benefits of digital commercial opportunities; with the inconvenience of physical location becoming a second-place consideration."

Ready to go projects that will help Tasmania's recovery

Business recovery

Karina Dambergs
FermenTasmania
I-LEAD 2018

FermenTasmania's fermentation hub facility - this incubator is driving economic development for the region through the development of new fermented products to create new businesses or grow existing ones, and increase skills and training. Commercial research and agritourism is perfect for the State and will help us have an area of excellence we are known for globally.

Sarah Coulson
Tasmanian Health Service
TLP12 2018

Telehealth partnership for Clinical Trial. This will reduce interstate patient travel. Improve access to care and treatment closer to home and create jobs in clinical trials and research here in Tasmania.

Community

John Ralph
Ascent Fitness
TLP1 2007

The Launceston Urban Fringe Trail (LUFT) is a 102km pedestrian and cycling circuit that goes around the edge of Greater Launceston. With extra investment in amenities and interpretation, the LUFT can be a new tourist offering, an education asset and an enhancer of community connection, health and well-being and tourism attraction. The 102km trail is already there. Let's build on it.

Grace Walsh
Future Impact Group (George Town)
TLP12 2018

In response to community voices and data gathering carried out by the group, there are concrete plans to develop a hub of support, mentoring, training and innovation for those out of work in the community, a digital mentoring program and a coordinated initiative that will regenerate the town centre and support start-ups and new business.

Rachel Power
Waterfalls Cafe & Gallery
I-LEAD 2018

Mt Field Retreat has been shelved for two years. This accommodation and conference centre is a game changer for our regional location. It will also be a tourism and hospitality training ground for our community, extending our current exceptionally successful training program at Waterfalls.

Infrastructure

John Ranicar,
Forager Foods Pty Ltd
TLP2 2008

We are now planning a significant expansion into a new but complementary field of food manufacturing using new technology. We are partnering with UTAS, Industry, Defense and the equipment supplier to build a global centre of excellence that will include manufacturing, R&D and education. Plans are well advanced, site is secured, equipment has been identified and negotiated and the project is ready to proceed subject to finance.

Chris Griffin
Visit Northern Tasmania
TLP10 2006

We launched a COVID Gold Standard business coaching program sponsored by Bell Bay Aluminium to help small regional visitor businesses adapt to post-COVID conditions. We are pursuing an experimentation program to explore how new and existing visitor businesses can cater to niche markets that we can then become world famous for. We'll also be utilising co-design principles to develop future events and test the potential for development incubators and support services.

Conclusion

Training

Jessica Mostogl
Illuminate Education Australia
I-LEAD 2019

Using our innovation process and economic development experience we are ready to help people who have been made redundant to reskill and rethink their career, whether that is learning new skills for new positions or designing new initiatives to revitalise Tasmania.

Economic stimulus

Jessica Robbins
Tasmanian Way
TLP12 2018

Build back better by ensuring that investment in recovery builds a resilient, sustainable and thriving Tasmania and positions our island home as a global leader in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. 150 Tasmanians have shared their priorities on how we emerge to thrive via Thriving Tasmania: www.tasmanianway.org/thrivingtasmania. This process can be used more widely to engage Tasmanians in shaping our recovery and our future.

Margie Jenkin
Tasmanian Land Conservancy
TLP6 2012

TLC has pitched an economic environmental stimulus package to the State Government. As part of a national invitation, this could provide significant employment opportunities and invest in important environmental projects.

Responding to COVID-19 has been a significant challenge to our Tasmanian leaders.

The rapidly changing and uncertain situation has tested our leaders while providing valuable lessons in agility, and bringing forward their values as leaders in a time of crisis. More than half of our leaders have changed the way they do work including innovating new processes, technologies, products and services. Recovery concerns include general business uncertainty and economic impacts and how these may exacerbate social inequities and cohesion. The need for a long-term, holistic approach to recovery as well as strong leadership is emphasised.

Overall there is a sense of optimism both about the recovery of industry sectors as well as for the future of Tasmania. Optimism stems from Tasmania's community focus, our culture of collaboration and connection, the increased demand for products and services particularly around local food and renewable energy. Tasmanian leaders are optimistic about our State's recovery based on the opportunity to reset the vision to build a new and better normal in a way that stays true to who we are.

Tasmanian Leaders thanks its Alumni, Champions and other leaders who participated in this survey and for their actions to help Tasmanians build a new and better normal.

