

REPORT-BACK FROM BIEN PRIORITIES SUB-GROUPS

There were 7 issue areas arising from the January workshop that were considered by the sub-groups:

1. Articulation of Vision

The group considered that this project was eminently do-able by BIEN setting up a sub-committee. John's January report is a good basis for a first draft vision statement that could be crafted initially by the sub-committee. This draft could then be used to discuss with BICA, Council and other key stakeholders on Bruny. The draft statement should also be circulated to all BIEN members for comment.

The final vision statement could then be prepared, taking into account the results of all feedback. The next step would be to convert it into material for brochures and apps. It may be possible to apply for funding to produce such an app. It would be critical to find effective ways to disseminate the vision statement and visitor information to visitors to the island, such as, putting the app site on the bottom of each ferry ticket.

While not directly related to the vision statement, the group considered it well worthwhile promoting an iconic Bruny Island walk.

2. The Neck as Nexus

Because the re-development of the road across the Neck is imminent, the time is ripe for BIEN to lobby for there to be a visitor information node on the Neck. This would include much-improved signage about the Neck, its wildlife, natural features and indigenous history, as well as guidance on respectful wildlife viewing, especially with regard to Fairy Penguins.

Because the Neck Reserve is run by National Parks and is a highly significant site, BIEN needs to lobby National Parks to provide additional rangers for the Neck at peak times.

3. Sustainable Industry Development

BIEN's role with the main sustainable industries on Bruny (food, tourism, fishing, farming, building, the Arts, etc.) should primarily be education and advocacy. One of the barriers to sustainability is the lack of suitable infrastructure to support these industries to move towards more sustainable practices. Since Northwest Bay Shipping is subsidized by the Government to provide ferry services, they should be required by the Government to collect a levy to be used for such infrastructure development on the island. The group supported a Bed Tax to be collected by an independent authority and channeled back into tourism infrastructure improvement on Bruny. The group also recommended other island communities in Australia be consulted as to what their experience has been in promoting sustainable island development.

4. Community Relationship Building

The group recommended that BIEN initiate dialogue with those groups on Bruny that BIEN has not yet engaged, such as families that have been on the island for many generations and non-conservation oriented primary producers. One possible avenue for relationship building could be the

collection of local oral histories. Another topic for discussion might be ways to keep more Bruny produce on the island.

5. Biodiversity and the Biosphere

This sub-group placed a large emphasis on the Biosphere Reserve project as a potential umbrella under which to put most, if not all, BIEN's future activities. They posed the question, 'How committed to the Biosphere Reserve project is BIEN?' and considered it worth asking BIEN members if this is something they want to pursue with vigour. The first item required is a 'roadmap', some indication of the steps that are involved in accomplishing the creation of Bruny Island as a Biosphere Reserve, and the major milestones along the way. Given the support within some parts of Council for the d'Entrecasteaux Channel project, it is considered vital to involve Council seriously in this process if the decision is made to proceed with it wholeheartedly.

6. Transport

The sub-group considered that the issue is not so much about whether to have a bus to meet the ferry as it arrives on the island or not, as it is how to manage the dramatic increase in road traffic that will continue. A prime example is the road to the Lighthouse. BIEN could lobby National Parks to close this road off to the public and put on a bus to the lighthouse. This has been done in other National Parks, such as Cradle Mountain, where visitors are strongly encouraged to take the shuttle bus up to the Lodge. The costs to the government of the current arrangements are very substantial, regularly requiring air lifts of injured motorists.

This could be the opportunity to think differently about transport to the major tourist venues on Bruny, for instance, it could be an opportunity for a private company to provide a bus operator and tour guide for shuttle buses. Hire car companies would enthusiastically support such an initiative since so many of their vehicles are damaged when inexperienced drivers come off the road. For this idea to work, there needs to be ample parking spots provided for the public.

7. Integrated Environmental Management

The sub-group felt that BIEN can only gain traction in this large and complex topic by getting the ear of the relevant authorities, whether that is local government, National Parks or state government. They suggested putting together a portfolio of environmental management issues and what BIEN would like to see achieved with each issue. We could then employ a consultant experienced in getting the notice of appropriate ministers and senior personnel to put together a cogent document worded to gain the maximum attention. At the same time this information could be provided to the media to gain momentum and credibility for our stance on these issues. We also need to present to the government ways to fund what is required.

There is a precedent for such a strategy with the Port Douglas/Daintree region. This is a good example of how to manage a sudden surge in tourist numbers. The residents quickly found that they needed people with experience and credibility to talk to local and state government about upgrading the infrastructure, which, like Bruny Island, was totally inadequate for the rapid increase in numbers.

8. General Discussion

Tonia indicated that there are many groups on and off Bruny that are very concerned with the effect of visitor numbers on the wildlife and the natural values of the island. BIEN's role may well be to bring this discussion together, and to identify the companies and people on Bruny are who can be our partners in this process.

There was also general discussion about whether BIEN should proceed right away with the Biosphere project and subsume all other activities into this, or whether the Biosphere project should be pursued as one of a number of activities that BIEN is undertaking. The practicalities of this and the financial repercussions will be considered at the next meeting.