Bruny on the Brink: Governance, Gentrification and Tourism on an Australian Island

Rebecca Jackson

Ph.D. Candidate
School of Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
rjackson@postoffice.utas.edu.au

Abstract: This paper examines the influence of islandness on development and governance of Bruny Island (offshore from Tasmania, Australia's only island state). While traditional economic activities, particularly agriculture, are in decline, tourism is increasingly important to the island economy. While some 600 people live on the island all-year-round; there are some 2,000 ratepayers, including holiday home owners. This location is being rapidly 'discovered' by people drawn from interstate and overseas to the island lifestyle, and this is leading to a process of gentrification, with consequences for islanders. Bruny Island's local governing authority is based on the Tasmanian mainland and hence is another source of externally-driven change. Amidst these pressures, island community visioning can be an important source of resilience.

Keywords: islandness**,** development, tourism, gentrification, governance, visioning

Island Challenges

> *The Tasmanian coastline and coastal areas and islands are pretty much about*
> *the last places that can be hit in Australia for development and they're*
> *going to get hit* (RD1)[1].

Generalizations are difficult, but it can be argued that islands are subject to the impact of a common range of challenges associated with their island status (Royle, 2001). Compared to continents, islands have a higher ratio of coastline length to area, and coastal environments are particularly sensitive. Islands also tend to have limited natural resources. Stratford (2006: 274) notes that "many island populations are internally fragmented by deep divisions about whether and to what extent they should conserve or develop those [limited] resources and engage in the processes of economic globalization". Small islands typically have a narrow economic base and diseconomies of scale mean higher *per capita* costs to provide basic services. Transport difficulties affect a range of economic and social issues, including tourism and access to health care (Baldacchino, 2004). Small populations also make islands more demographically volatile - for example, youth out-migration - with

---

[1] Quotes in italics are the words of interview participants. Their status is identified thus: RR is Respondent Resident; RSG is Respondent State Government; RLG is Respondent Local Government; RT is Respondent Tourism; and RD is Respondent Developer.

knock-on effects. When affluent mainlanders purchase island property as second homes, they tend to push up real estate prices and exclude lower income classes. This process is described as *gentrification*. Clark *et al*. (in press, 2007) cite instances of gentrification on islands around the world.

This paper examines the influence of islandness on development and governance of Bruny Island, Tasmania. Is Bruny particularly susceptible to development (tourism and residential development, specifically gentrification)? What is the relationship between islandness and local governance, and is island vulnerability exacerbated when systems of governance are imposed from outside? Are there opportunities for Bruny islanders to be resilient in the face of externally-generated changes? By resilience in social terms, I mean "… the ability of human societies … to cope with, adapt to and shape change without losing options for future development" (UNESCO & Contributors, 2004).

The research forms part of an ongoing doctoral study exploring the effects of development and tourism on four Australian islands (Bruny Island, Melbourne's Phillip Island, Adelaide's Kangaroo Island, and Perth's Rottnest Island). The broader research examines development on these offshore islands and asks whether they are being managed effectively for tourism, residential and environmental purposes. The study uses qualitative research methods: case studies, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. As researcher, my initial role was to select appropriate case study islands, based on the criteria of being a day trip destination from a capital city of an Australian state, accessible by car and/or ferry, and a key tourism destination. After some background research on each island, I identified key stakeholders through criterion sampling (from publicly available information) and through snowball sampling as interviews proceeded: this procedure "yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981: 141). I formally interviewed people with key roles in managing the islands (state and local government officers), tourism operators, developers, and island residents who had a leading role with particular community groups. Interviews were digitally recorded, and, in accordance with ethics procedures, verbatim transcripts were sent to respondents for verification. The sample number was limited by practical considerations such as time and financial resources (particularly considering the cost of interstate travel). I reached saturation point "where collecting additional data seems counterproductive" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 136) after interviewing 12-15 respondents.

For the Bruny Island research, I had informal discussions with 4 individuals, and then interviewed 19 respondents over January to August 2005. Sixteen of these granted me permission to use their interview transcripts. Through an inductive analysis, I have focused on key themes that emerged from the interview data. These themes are interesting in themselves, but this paper will focus on links between these themes, and on the concept of islandness.

After a brief introduction, I will examine major development pressures on Bruny Island (focusing on tourism and gentrification) and comment on their consequences. I will then

discuss the influences of external (mainland-based governance) and internal factors (islander visions). I will conclude by examining the scope for island resilience.
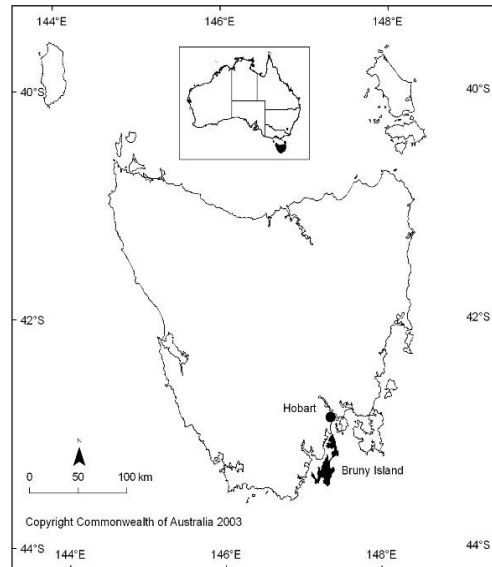
Bruny Island

Tasmania, Australia's only island state, has 1,000 offshore islands, islets and rocky outcrops (Geoscience Australia, 2004). Bruny Island is Tasmania's fourth largest island (353 km^2), located 40 km south of the capital city, Hobart (*see* Figure 1). It is accessible from the Tasmanian mainland by a 20-minute vehicular ferry crossing. The island is historically significant: the Aboriginal Nuenonne band occupied Lunawanna-alonnah (the indigenous name for the island) for many centuries. Abel Tasman was the first European in the region in 1642 and was followed by explorers Furneaux, Cook and Bligh. The island was named after French Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux. Whalers and sealers began operating in 1804; from the 1830s, the island was predominantly used for timber, fruit growing, fishing, and sheep and cattle grazing.

Figure 1: Location of Bruny Island, Tasmania

Bruny Island's all-year-round resident population is just over 600 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). However, there are at least 2,000 ratepayers, reflecting a sizeable population of shack (or holiday home) owners. The island also draws a fair number of tourists. Tourism Tasmania (2006) figures show that 46,336 tourists from mainland Australia and overseas visited Bruny in 2005 (a 13.8% increase over 2004). The last Tasmanian Intrastate Travel Survey, for 1997, estimated 71,800 visits to Bruny by Tasmanians (Tourism Tasmania, 1998) (More recent figures specific to Bruny Island are not available.) *Key attractions are its wilderness and wildlife and its laid-back atmosphere and lack of people* (RT1). The South Bruny National Park was gazetted in 1997. It comprises 14% of the island's area, including rainforest, and is surrounded by spectacular coastal scenery. An eco-cruise business operating around this coast attracts thousands of visitors annually to view bird and marine life. Wildlife viewing is also popular at 'The Neck' (the narrow isthmus joining the north and south of the island) which is home to Little Penguins (*Eudyptula minor)* and Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus tenuirostris)* in their nesting seasons.

Islandness and Development

The appeal of islands to tourists has been extensively documented (Baum, 1997; Lockhart, 1997; Royle, 2001). Although not a tropical destination, Bruny Island is a drawcard to many domestic and international visitors, as indicated by the figures above. Islands close to

concentrated domestic markets tend to attract significant visitor numbers, as they present a convenient destination for short breaks by city dwellers, and cities act as a gateway for interstate and international tourists. Islandness is also a feature that attracts permanent and seasonal residents: benefits of island life identified by interview respondents include the isolation, relaxed lifestyle and close-knit community.

Tourism

> *Bruny is a fantastic island - not as fantastic as it was, so while you see it now and you think how great it was on the scale of what it was once, that's the price of development and tourism adds to the price* (RSG3).

Reflecting similar challenges on many islands, Bruny has experienced a decline in traditional economic activities, particularly agriculture. The island's *economic base is very, very narrow and quite fragile so to get any income off the island is a challenge. Some people live on the island and work in Hobart every day, so it is another way of getting money into the local community (RLG4).* The tourism industry is increasingly important to the local economy. *The guy next door makes more money out of accommodation cabins than he did out of cattle (RR1).* The economic effect of visitors to the island, including the activities of absentee landowners, Tasmanians and interstate and international visitors, is estimated at just under AUS$12 million annually (US$9 million as at Nov 2006) (Kingborough Council, 2006a). In terms of local employment, tourism is significant. *It is by far the biggest employer now. Probably over 100 jobs indirectly could be related to tourism ... 42 businesses reliant on tourism (RR1).* Some interview respondents identified the absence of public transport and insufficient accommodation as limiting factors for Bruny tourism. During 2005, less than one-third of visitors (14,546 people) stayed overnight (Tourism Tasmania, 2006). Bruny's proximity to Hobart makes it a feasible day trip destination, and this has economic and environmental implications for the island. *Most of the dollars are spent back in the city, in this case Hobart, where the people are actually staying. They* [day-visit destinations] *take all the impacts during the day and don't get much of the benefit (RLG4).*

Tourism can also generate social tensions. In my interviews, several islanders voiced concerns about increased traffic and crowded ferries. Here, the significance of islandness is most apparent, as ferry access is an issue specific to islands. On Grand Manan Island, Canada, tourism is becoming an increasingly dominant economic sector, which has implications for social relations (Marshall, 1999). Prior to the introduction of a larger vessel, islanders had resented tourists as they were taking their spaces on the ferry, and there was no reservations system (Marshall, 1999). A similar problem is occurring on Bruny Island (where reservations are also not allowed), especially over summer periods and at other peak visitor times. Interviews revealed that the issue of ferry capacity impacts not only on residents, but also on some tourism businesses.

Social tensions may also arise between islanders, from issues such as competition for space between those who are involved in tourism and those who are not, and from differing opinions about change: *There is major conflict between the people who want change and*

the people who do not ... residents basically want more control over what can come to the island (RR4). Tourism developments can be perceived by residents as a threat to the island and their lifestyle. Thus, on Kangaroo Island in South Australia:

> *They don't like outsiders coming in and changing the island and so a lot of people are opposed to new developments just because they don't like change and a lot are genuinely opposed to it because it's going to change the character of the island and it's going to have a negative impact on the culture, environment, economics, visitor experience and so on, which will have a long-term impact on tourism* (KI1) (from an interview with a Kangaroo Island respondent, as part of the author's ongoing doctoral research).

One of the 'mainlander' respondents recognizes the importance of maintaining Bruny's island character, noting that a key issue is:

> *Sustainability in the context of the character of the place; the values that the residents place on living there; what is Bruny all about? Sustainability in terms of maintaining the character that obviously appeals to visitors ... lots of those 'bloody visitors' starting to detract from the aesthetics, the lifestyle that people have there. Does that suddenly mean that residents do not want to live there anymore? Do they start to leave the island and does that suddenly change the character of a place - the friendly locals? (RSG1)*

Balancing tourism growth with maintaining the island's natural and social values is appreciated by an island tour operator, who believes that as the island is becoming a more iconic destination, a key challenge is:

> *... how to balance the visitors to not spoil why the first ones came there in the first place and not to destroy what the residents, and holiday people who come regularly, love about the island. The infrastructure that gets put in has to be compatible to that. I'm all for more infrastructure, accommodation, tourists, and so on, but I'm dead against massive development without looking at the overall picture (RT1).*

Marshall (2001) discusses tourism as a form of economic salvation in isolated rural areas and notes the increasing interest by the provincial government in using tourism to generate revenues on Grand Manan. The provincial government has been a source of externally generated change, and "with its plans for more 'upscale' tourism … has indicated interest in a more aggressive type of tourism, with higher commercial value and a different type of tourist" (Marshall, 1999: 107-8). In her tourism exit survey, Marshall (1999: 112) found an overwhelming consensus that the island should 'stay natural, 'not change', and remain 'non-commercial'. While this point will be discussed further below, it often seems to be the case that existing tourist types and locals are compatible in their visions, and it is governments and developers who are at odds with them, through favouring economic outcomes over environmental and social values.

Islands are special places, not only to islanders, but also to mainlanders. This is clearly illustrated in the case of the Western Australian island of Rottnest, near Perth. Rottnest is a government-owned island; there is no privately-owned land and no rate-payers. In the 1980s, the State Government had proposed a major development, which was met with such resistance by mainlanders, that they abandoned the plan. Many 'mainland' Tasmanians regularly visit Bruny on camping or bushwalking trips, attracted to the island's natural values and the absence of other visitors and five-star resorts:

> *Tourism on Bruny comes from people who don't want to see that new tourism come in with a lot of money and a lot of high-class resort type thing where people will have to pay a lot of money to have a holiday, so it's the sense of the beauty being exploited that people don't like (RR4).*

Kingborough Council, Bruny's local governing authority (but based on the Tasmanian 'mainland' – *more below*) appears to recognize the value of the island in terms of tourism. *It's probably the biggest asset we have (RLG5).* Their visitor strategy focuses on "facilitating appropriate development consistent with the values of local communities" (Kingborough Council, 2006a). State Government, through Tourism Tasmania, also influences Bruny tourism – initially through attracting international and interstate tourists to Tasmania, and through showcasing selected Bruny products. However, the focus of this paper is local governance.

Clearly tourism has been a strong force of change on the island, and is a key management issue in this case study. Another important change has been the island's residential composition, as many newcomers are attracted to the island lifestyle.

Gentrification

Bruny Island was recently named a 'top ten' property investment hotspot in Australia:

> Affordability, proximity to the state's capital city and the pristine nature of its southern coastline and islands, such as Bruny Island, will make this part of Australia a popular sea-change destination (eChoice, 2005).

Reflecting the popular trend for coastal housing in Australia, Bruny is dotted with shacks and more upmarket second homes. A recent trend involving affluent mainlanders buying into the island, and subsequent social impacts, may be described as gentrification. Gentrification is a process of social change traditionally applied to urban localities. It involves the upgrading of an area and accompanying changes in its social composition (Phillips, 2005), which tends to result in the displacement of lower income households. While gentrification studies have primarily focused on urban spaces, the process is also evident in rural areas. Unfortunately, site-specific socio-economic data is not available: like many islands which are not distinct jurisdictions, the required data specific to Bruny Island was unavailable, other than in terms of 2001 census data. Data from the 2006 census will not be released until mid-2007, so it is not even possible to show changes over recent times. Moreover, since the visual effects of gentrification are not always overt,

gentrification can be described as a 'sleeping' problem for Bruny Island and should not be ignored. Through discussions with residents and shack owners, there is anecdotal evidence of gentrification on Bruny; recent media reports about permanent residences replacing shacks around Tasmania also suggest this:

> "Real estate agents and residents say the old shack communities around the state are being transformed into satellite suburbs with grandiose houses replacing ramshackle holiday homes … the population make-up of Bruny started to change about four years ago when property prices boomed … people started advertising houses and land on the internet, and mainland buyers thought they were bagging a bargain and snapped them up. That encouraged many shack owners to jump on the bandwagon and also sell" (Vowles, 2006: 22).

Bruny is exposed to gentrification not only through tourism, but also through technology, in the form of the internet as a property guide for mainland and international investors. Technological improvements in recent years have also enabled more people to live on islands through operating home-based businesses. Residential subdivisions are fragmenting Bruny's arable land and environmentally-significant landscapes, and rundown shacks are being upgraded by newcomers. One respondent told me that in the past ten years there has been much new investment in housing construction:

> *Housing was very cheap here, but now there is huge demand for builders. There are four builders full-time on the island but lots and lots of builders and trades people are coming to the island to work now* (RR6).

Rising land prices have induced many farmers to sell their land:

> *Land prices are just crazy. It's having an interesting impact because people who have been sitting on land not worth a crumpet suddenly find themselves with money in their pockets so they sell up and disappear … the increase in land prices has helped some people to become mobile - get them out of Bruny Island … those trends are going to continue and what will happen is that a lot of the old shacks will be bought up and replaced with better dwellings and you will also see more permanent residents* (RR1).

However, some long-term residents told me they are concerned that their children will not be able to afford to buy property on the island. Increasing land prices are also excluding many lower income people from buying into the island, which, in one respondent's view:

> *… is extremely unfortunate because it means that our coastal locations and areas of high amenity will be occupied only by those with the resources* (RR1).

The term 'gentrification' is attributed to Glass (1964) who observed that the process can result in the whole character of a district changing. It appears that the rural character of Bruny Island is fading; particularly as improved access has made the island closer (in terms of travel time) to a central location, the city of Hobart. Improved ferry access has

created more opportunities for mainlanders to have secondary residences on the island: much as how Baldacchino (2007, in press) suggests that the introduction of fixed links can accelerate the process of gentrification. Easier access has also shifted the focus from the insular community to the wider world. *Once the vehicular ferry came to the island (which was 1950) ... it was not just your local community ... it has gone from being quite an isolated place to being like a little suburb almost* (RR4). Many islanders are against further improvements in access: *As soon as you put big ferries on, you've got every other bit of infrastructure and then you haven't got an island anymore ... Bruny is rapidly going downhill because they are trying to get the access better and better* (RR2)*.* Is Bruny becoming an outlying suburb of Hobart and losing its distinctiveness in the process?

> *The beauty of the island is that wild and romantic getaway feel but now you're looking at subdivisions the whole island romance is disappearing ... The island is only going to get more popular. In fact, it will be a well-known commuting area for people in Hobart now that the ferry is more reliable and faster so that access is easier ... it's really disappointing to have relinquished islands for that purpose* (RSG3).

Residents clearly value their island's lifestyle benefits: *Bruny is the last vestige of privacy and solitude and a haven away from things* (RR3). Isolation, a key feature of islandness, was recognized by many respondents as both an attractive feature, and a challenging element of island life:

> *If you are a reclusive type of person it is an ideal sort of environment; but, on the other hand, if you are not it is a major challenge. You feel as though you have to go to a city at least once a week to get your hit of whatever you need ... it takes you a few days to kind of acclimatize to it ... it's like a culture shock* (RR4).

The boundedness of islands may provide residents with a greater sense of identity and community than mainland counterparts, particularly when faced with external threats to their way of life. Marshall (1999: 95) suggests that community opposition to particular issues on Grand Manan reflects "a collective will to protect an insular culture against external forces of change". However, she also recognizes "complex internal 'webs' of relationships that are in constant tension and occasional conflict", most significantly between native islanders and those 'from away' (1999: 108). One interview respondent told me that, on Bruny, *it is a tribal thing and everybody on Bruny more or less pulls together if they see something against them; then they all fight like cats when it is something internal* (RR2)*.* In his Shetland island study, Cohen (1987: 24) argues:

> "… the island's boundaries are secured, on the one hand, by the sea; but on the other, by a densely knit web of kinship and a powerful sense of historically founded discreteness. Its insular history has placed the community at the very centre of Whalsay people's consciousness … this does not signify parochialism so much as a deeply ingrained view of the outside world as the source of unpropitious influences".

Moreover, Cohen (1987: 144) asserts that the "struggle to accommodate change and to maintain the boundary requires Whalsay people to be constantly vigilant, and to be prepared to fight for the preservation of their community". One Bruny resident discussed the impact of islandness on social relations:

> *We are vulnerable but people on an island tend to be more close-knit as well because we rely on the neighbours ... They're the only other people around ... you have to learn to get on with them on a certain level even though they may not be people that you necessarily socialize with or be friendly with if you were living somewhere else but there's a certain sort of respect that you have to develop ... Everything is word of mouth around here ... The negative side of that is gossip which you probably can get anywhere but you're more aware of it on the island. People know more about you than you know about yourself half the time* (RR4).

However, as this secluded rural island is being 'discovered' by mainland Australians and international investors (many of whom only visit once or twice a year), the close-knit community appears to be unravelling:

> *In the '70s ... everyone knew everyone because there was only a population of 311 ... but, about ten years ago, the population started to increase quite dramatically ... In the last five years, the trend has been for a more elite mainlander (mainland meaning the eastern seaboard* [of Australia] *and America and other nations) coming here to buy land to either build on and live part-time or as an investment. Very rarely these people have anything to do with community activities ... there would be lots here I have never heard of and never see …There has been a changing tone with the newer residents ... the open, carefree atmosphere of Bruny is being undermined by people fencing everything; locking gates; having alarm systems on; and they even fly in and fly out with aeroplanes. What is our island coming to?* (RR3).

According to Clark *et al.* (in press, 2007), gentrification "involves the re- or dis-placement of residents/land-users by relatively more powerful and resourceful residents/land-users". Focusing on a group of Swedish islands near the city of Gothenburg, Clark *et al.* (*ibid.*) ask whether gentrification on small island communities "is welcomed as beneficial to local development (the alternative presumably being depopulation, decay, and the decline of local economy), or resisted as a threat to existing forms of livelihood, causing displacement and demise of local culture". The period when the agricultural sector was economically dominant on Bruny Island was associated with strong community ties. However, tourism has now shifted the island's economic base and exposed Bruny to the outside world and to potential investors. Clark *et al.* (*ibid.*) suggest that what distinguishes gentrification on many islands from that in urban contexts is "the strength of recreation, tourism and summer homes as (so-called) 'higher and better' land-use". Urban gentrification typically leaves the poor on the fringes, pushed out by rising property prices. However, in the case of 'sea change' - the movement of population to the Australian coast, resulting in tourism growth and real estate development amongst coastal communities -

affluent people and developers are gentrifying coastal fringes and extending their reach to more peripheral spaces: islands.

> *An increasing number of people seem to be able to live in isolated places ... comparatively a lot of North Americans come to Bruny Island and set up home* (RLG4).

Is there a certain type of people that could be called gentrifiers? Ley (1994) believes that a cultural class, consisting of artists and cultural professionals, begins the process. These 'trend-setters' are usually economically marginal groups but they have a high educational status. As their numbers grow, first stage gentrifiers create amenities (particularly service establishments) valued by those with more economic capital, who may then follow (*ibid.*). Ley (2003) suggests that intellectuals are often early successors to artists. Tasmania tends to attract a significant number of artists, and so too does Bruny Island, where several new residents are artists or intellectuals, many of them well-known:

> *People who have moved there as part of a seachange - a lot of them are highly-qualified professionals. I think we have six women who have got PhDs and four men with PhDs on the island and that's a large number - ten people in a population of 600. There are other people with quite significant qualifications and we have notable people; three world-class artists ... these people are bringing skills and knowledge ...* [and] *have a strong environmental ethic, almost exclusively … There has been an emergence of a more sophisticated community attitude which has seen things like a Film Society, Christmas pantomimes, and art shows … There is some absolutely brilliant work being produced* (RR1).

> *There are cultural shifts. There are things happening on Bruny Island that wouldn't have happened five or ten years ago. We've got theatre sports happening in Adventure Bay which we would never have seen, Land-care groups and so forth* (RLG5).

Ley's (2003) observations of artists as gentrifiers are based on inner cities, where artists have rejected the suburbs, and he notes that life on the edge is their preferred social location. In the case of Bruny Island, perhaps artists are also rejecting the suburbs, and prefer life on the edge in a geographical sense. Retirees are particularly attracted to Bruny Island, perhaps because they are not constrained by employment or schooling considerations as other demographic groups are. Lazaridis *et al*. (1999) examined the use of islands as retirement havens for outsiders, and found in Corfu a natural progression from being a tourist to the island, to buying a second home, to then moving permanently to the island.

Interview respondents have noted changes in community composition on the island. Various groups are identified as 'alternates', 'rednecks', 'shackies' and 'sea-changers'. Social tensions between some of these groups are evident, and can be related back to changes in the island's economic base. For example, some descendents of the early settlers, mainly associated with farming, are claimed to show:

> *… extreme hostility to outsiders, quite palpable. If you go into the hotel where a lot of these people, particularly the men are, they gather their strength and support in one another in places like the pub. It's almost dangerous to go in there - just the vibes … they have very traditional attitudes. They feel under threat, and their lifestyle is under threat … There are extraordinary tensions between the groups and it's easy to make mistakes … if you cross boundaries and try to do what you might normally do in, say an urban situation, where these things are less obvious, then you do get hostility because places like this operate on rumour* (RR1).

Mainland respondents have also recognized changes in the types of people living on Bruny Island:

> *… generally more educated …, more likely to be fairly sensitive to conservation issues, a lot of clashes culturally between them and a lot of the older more traditional land owners, they're more of a shoot it and chop it type approach* (RLG5); *You've got the traditional residents and the newcomers, and there is a certain degree of tension between the two. You tend generally to find a different values set between people who have chosen a 'sea change'* (RLG4).

Such internal tensions are not limited to Bruny Island. Studies of other island communities have found similar social divisions. On Grand Manan Island, for "new permanent residents on the island, known locally as people 'from away', there is a pervasive sense in all their relationships with locals that they are outsiders", and they are excluded from decision-making opportunities and leadership positions (Marshall, 2001: 166; 1999). Marshall (2001: 173) suggests that this split between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', evident in many small communities, occurs because "people from away are seen as intruders who may threaten historically rooted values and norms of behaviour. In the struggle to maintain identities directly tied to shared histories and experiences of the island, people from away are marginalized". However, Kohn (2002: 150) notes that on Sial (a pseudonym for a Scottish island), some newcomers opt to become social recluses, having moved there "with a wish to belong to an imagined lifestyle, not to a socially interactive community". 'Summer swallows' (people who own holiday homes on the island but reside elsewhere):

> … like the 'good-lifers' who come to live like hermits on Sial, have engaged with the popular, romantic, and even academically condoned image of the simple, empty, rural haven. They identify with the place through their property … to which they escape … they become entirely free of obligation. They experience their holiday, and a holiday is like a dream far away from work and commitments. Being part of the community, on the other hand, or becoming an islander, entails developing a rich set of obligations that are confirmed through active and regular engagement with others (Kohn, 2002: 153).

On Kangaroo Island, South Australia, there are also tensions between permanent residents and those who own holiday homes:

> *There are a lot of very wealthy people who have holiday homes ... I believe up to 40% of ratepayers on the island don't live on the island, so that's a little bit disconcerting because it doesn't encourage infrastructure on the island and ... during peak holiday seasons it puts more pressure on transfer services* (KI2) (from interview with a Kangaroo Island respondent, as part of the author's ongoing doctoral research).

Interview data from Bruny Island also revealed problems with service and infrastructure provision in the small community. Both tourism and residential development are straining the capacity of the island's existing infrastructure and services. This issue has been recognized by the Tasmanian State Government, which recently initiated a Bruny Island transport review as a result of an "increase in demand for coastal properties, increased tourist numbers and continued economic activity" (Tasmanian Government, 2005). Isolation *is* a feature that attracts many new residents to Bruny; yet:

> *Then they want a hamburger joint or services and demand it from the council. Tourists and new residents come from Sydney or elsewhere and expect services comparable to where they previously lived* (RLG2).

With increases in property values, accompanying increases in rates obviously benefit local councils; but they then need to upgrade services and infrastructure, which may encourage more newcomers to relocate to the island. However, there are also positive outcomes from growing island populations. Residents may desire a larger population to justify a separate governing body, improvements in health services, or the establishment or continuation of an island school. Interestingly, the island's changing residential composition is reflected in a shift in environmental attitudes:

> *People who have recently acquired land or moved to Bruny Island have a strong interest in environmental values; this is a really positive outcome from the recent development. The locals are less concerned* (RLG2).

Tourism and gentrification are both forms of development which can induce internal social tensions. I will now turn to a discussion on local governance, as a source of tension between the island and mainland.

Islandness and Local Governance

> *Have an island authority set up, rather than have us relying on the good wishes of a mainland council* (RR7).

Baldacchino (2004: 80-81) notes that metropoles may try to prevent island devolution by "deliberately avoiding the creation of exclusively island-based administrative or political units, ensuring that geographic "island regions" are incorporated within larger sub-national units". Bruny Island Council was amalgamated in 1993 with Kingborough Council, the adjacent mainland Tasmanian local government body. Considering that Bruny has a distinct community, Haward & Zwart (2000) suggest that it could be viewed as an

'unnatural' amalgamation, formed only on the basis of administrative efficiency. Bruny's small size and population has made it susceptible to amalgamation with a mainland council. Nevertheless, some resident respondents acknowledged problems with the former Bruny Island Council, particularly relating to diseconomies of scale in terms of providing services. In addition, since everyone tends to know each other well – perhaps too well - on small islands, this may affect decision-making:

> *It was difficult for a Council like Bruny to manage this island professionally and not to be parochial. There tended to be almost petty corruption on the scale of the Bruny Council because everybody knew everyone and decisions were often made on the basis of local interests or self-interest or the interests of the people that you knew rather than with a greater vision* (RR6).

However, many islanders are displeased about their perceived loss of independence:

> *Ninety five per cent of the island residents were against the amalgamation ... I'm yet to be convinced that it was a wise move. We used to make our own decisions and that's pretty important to an independent islander* (RR7).

Following amalgamation, the Bruny Island Community Association was established as a 'watchdog service', and is now affiliated with other island organizations (RR7). In 2004, Kingborough Council introduced a new municipality-wide planning scheme (a document regulating or prohibiting use or development of land) which replaced the *Bruny Island Planning Scheme 1986*. Changes to the planning scheme have concerned some longer-term residents, particularly in relation to subdivision of rural land:

> *They have great tracts of land which they are reserving for forty-spotted pardalotes, swift parrots ... The mostly arable farmland does not harbour these species so we are looking at land that is no good for agriculture being kept and agricultural land being subdivided ... in the previous planning scheme they were not allowed to subdivide arable farmland* (RR7).

While some residents expressed their preference for a separate island jurisdiction, another islander believes that planning issues on the island in particular need to be addressed separately from the rest of the municipality:

> *It would be important to develop a particular planning strategy for the island as a separate thing from the rest of Kingborough ... Some form of administering that from the island would be an ideal situation, in consultation with the services that are available from having a larger council office - that infrastructure which we can never achieve on Bruny* (RR6).

However, one of the views from the 'other side' is that islanders should be treated the same as everyone else in the municipality:

> *They see themselves as special and different; not sure if we do ... Their sensitivity is on the basis that they used to have their own council in 1992 and therefore they see themselves as being different, perpetuated particularly by the old-timers who used to be on the old Council. They liked the old days because they could do what they wanted ... There's been a push for years for a separate committee to exist for Bruny Island matters, as part of the push for sort of semi-autonomy* (RLG5).

Whether or not it is merely a matter of appeasement, recent Council initiatives towards Bruny are promising. In late 2005 the Council established a Bruny Island Advisory Group, as a special committee under the *Local Government Act 1993*:

> *Since 1993 when we were amalgamated, we've been plugging for a special advisory group ... they're calling for nominations ... finally, after over 10 years of hoping to one day have a voice* (RR3).

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to facilitate improved communications and consultation on matters relating to the Planning Scheme and future amendments; Council services; strategies for agriculture, tourism/visitors and environmental management; and liaison with State Government on services (Kingborough Council, 2006b). However, the advisory body does not have the standing of a Council Committee, so its activities are reported to Council through the Community Development and Arts Committee. Nevertheless, the Advisory Group has played an important role in community visioning, which is an expression of internal views about the future, as opposed to the external visions of the mainland local government.

Islander Visioning

> *Council has got to get this vision business for Bruny Island and get it incorporated in the Planning Scheme fast and that is the only thing that I can think of in the short term that might save something for Bruny ... everybody has to have their say and the rich people, if they have the bigger say, we will go nowhere because they still want their big house on top of the sand dune looking at the sea* (RR2).

Various islanders around the world have been adopting community visioning: "a process by which a community envisions the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it" (Ames, 1993: 7). The term is derived from a conjunction of *vision* and *planning* (Ames, 2001). Governments may find visioning a useful tool for sustainability, particularly in determining regional sustainability strategies (Waller, 2003). However, in analyzing the integration of sustainability principles in the planning processes of local tourism destinations in Australia, Ruhanen (2004) questions the experience of local governments in tourism planning. She notes that, as primary industries face decline and tourism rises in importance, local governments need to re-channel their planning and management skills. A key consideration is whether tourism should be envisioned as a separate industry or as part of a wider island sustainability plan, linked to other economic sectors and to social and environmental factors. Ioannides & Holcomb (2003) emphasize the importance of adopting planning and policy frameworks that do not treat tourism in isolation; Grant (2004)

advocates a similar form of integrated tourism planning with respect to the Isle of Wight. A group of tourism operators recently formed Bruny Tourism Incorporated, which aims "to promote and facilitate tourism on Bruny Island while at the same time protecting the island's unique culture, way of life and environment" (Bruny Tourism Inc., 2006). The group's short-term goals include developing a strategic tourism plan and branding Bruny as a unique destination. A member of Bruny Tourism Inc. noted the benefits of a formal group:

> *… the more people that we get into a group like we have formed and incorporated and everything, becomes a voice that Council and Government listen to a lot more and it is the preferred way that the Government – local, State and Federal Government – would listen to groups (RT1).*

A respondent from Kingborough Council noted that they have started looking at a process of branding the island:

> *… to decide what their competitive advantages really are, what their key values are, and how they can develop their tourism experience around those values, but we'd like to think that, rather than just do a tourism planning exercise, it is a brand for the whole island - the guys that are producing the food, the farmers and other industries* (RLG4).

As a tool for managing development, the local planning scheme is pivotal to sustainability strategies. The Kingborough Planning Scheme is currently under review, a process which presents a formal avenue for islanders to provide input. In terms of community consultation, it is important to resist the temptation to group 'the islanders' together as one voice. As shown in the discussion above about 'old-timers' and 'newcomers', various groups have very different views on the future of their island. However, it can be argued that islandness presents an opportunity for more coherent visioning, as the boundedness of islands may lend their residents a greater sense of identity, and definable spaces present opportunities for branding in marketing. Following a petition to Council from ratepayers, the Bruny Island Advisory Group recently facilitated a survey of residents and ratepayers to obtain views on a vision for the island. The petition stated:

> … while not being opposed to development in principle, request that all large scale housing development submissions for Bruny Island be deferred until a future vision plan for Bruny has been provided by Council in collaboration with residents. We are concerned that insufficient attention is being paid to the ability of the Island's infrastructure to cope with increases in population. We would like to see a Future Vision Plan that provides a balance between the permanent population and the supporting infrastructure, while preserving the appealing uniqueness and non-suburb like character of Bruny Island (Kingborough Council, 2006c: 1).

The survey, 'A Future Vision for Bruny Island', received 185 responses (a 14.7% response rate). In terms of advantages of living on Bruny, the top responses were the environment, relaxed lifestyle, supportive community, and isolation (these are commonly identified as

appealing features of islands). Most respondents view island isolation as a positive feature, enabling "a more relaxed and quieter lifestyle, and a more self-sufficient and supportive community", and that "as it took a definite choice to live here, many of the disadvantages are accepted within that choice of lifestyle" (Kingborough Council, 2006d). Negative aspects about living on the island largely relate to the ferry service (an island-specific feature) and roads. The Council reported a survey finding that "over-governance is to be avoided" (Kingborough Council, 2006d), but did not elaborate on this. Realistic opportunities for the island focussed mainly on tourism, particularly encouraging low key ecotourism, and development (in a controlled way). A balance between development and lifestyle is seen as important. Inappropriate/excessive development and loss of heritage and natural resources were both recognized as threats to the island (Kingborough Council, 2006d).

One survey question asked whether Bruny can "sustain an increased permanent or holiday resident population without compromising the Island's important values" (Kingborough Council, 2006d). Most respondents believe the island can sustain a population increase but that it would require infrastructure upgrading, particularly in health and emergency services, roads, and ferry services. Interestingly, no survey questions were asked about whether the island can sustain an increase in tourist numbers. Perhaps this reflects the economic value of tourism to the island, and that any concerns about sharing the island are with permanent 'others', not short-term tourists:

> *The population of the island would be 90-95% positive about tourists... Because it's such a small community, everyone can see the benefits ... jobs;*
> *having their eyes opened to different experiences; and they're proud of their*
> *island* (RR1).

Survey respondents were asked to state their vision for the island and their responses were collated into the following top two statements: "maintain the Island in its naturally beautiful, unique, clean state, keeping it balanced and in harmony between rural and urban settings", and "retain a sense of community which recognizes tolerance and caring by friendly people who are perceived as vibrant, creative and diverse" (Kingborough Council, 2006d). The same document states that the results "will form a valuable source for future planning", with plans to integrate them into the Planning Scheme review. While it is hoped that the survey results will feed into policy and sustainability strategies, experiences in other locations are not encouraging. For example, the South Australian Planning Minister recently commented on the provisional approval for a Aus$10 million tourism development on Kangaroo Island, which had met with considerable community resistance: "I acknowledge that the proposed development will have an environmental impact, however on balance this impact is acceptable because of the significant tourism and employment benefits likely to be generated by the resort" (Planning SA, 2006). For this State Government, economic benefits outweighed environmental and community concerns. (While Kangaroo Island has its own local council, this proposal was declared a Major Development, and was therefore assessed by the State Government.)

Islands and Resilience

> [Property magazines have] *targeted Bruny Island as the next big place for private investment and development. Federal and State Tourism as well, in their tourism development for Tasmania, have identified the really untapped resource that needs to be marketed. It is going to come under increasing pressure for development, serious pressure. I'd suggest there's a lot of … offshore owners there now, just waiting to do something* (RD1).

Islands appeal to tourists, mainland residents and developers, and having been 'discovered' by such groups, Bruny Island is currently prone to such development pressures. While local governance is a strong influence on many aspects of island life, state and federal governments also play a role. If policy-makers, planners, developers and investors view offshore islands as untapped tourism destinations, development outcomes will diminish their environmental and social values. While not denying the powers of external forces and the difficulties of integrating internal opinions, Bruny residents have the opportunity to have their say in the future of their island through the Advisory Group and the review of the Planning Scheme, before developers pounce and the unique island character changes:

> *The biggest challenge for the island is … the people together deciding what sort of place they want Bruny Island to be and then getting involved actively in the management of the island to ensure that it heads in the direction they want it to go* (RLG4).

Marshall (1999: 111) has noted that "while corporate and government planners may encourage the migration of people and dollars to the island, the history and culture of Grand Manan suggest a level of resistance that may continue to ensure its insularity." She argues that "insularity for Grand Manan will continue to mean a strong collective identity and community values associated with strength and flexibility, as well as determination to define their own future" (*ibid*.). If Bruny Islanders are able and willing to define their own future, this would present an opportunity for resilience against development and exogenous change imposed by a mainland government.

Conclusion

In analyzing the key contemporary issues facing Bruny Island and its residents, I have sought to document how islandness influences the key themes that emerged from interview data: tourism development, residential development (particularly, the process of gentrification), and governance. Through its island status, Bruny attracts significant numbers of tourists, and an increasing number of seasonal and permanent residents, locally and globally. In this way, islandness is a positive feature economically, but can contribute to environmental and social vulnerabilities. While gentrification may cause social problems, particularly by displacing lower income residents, it may have environmental benefits, in that newcomers tend to have a stronger environmental ethic than some of the older, traditional 'shoot and chop it' residents. No doubt Bruny's environmental assets and low population density were part of the attraction to newcomers in the first place, and so

the latter do not want developments which could jeopardize their lifestyle. Bruny Island, like many sub-national islands that are viewed as appendages to the mainland, was liable to incorporation by a mainland local government. However, challenges associated with islandness were also identified when Bruny had its own local council (due to the small population and the resulting diseconomies of scale and 'almost petty corruption').

Hence, like many islands, Bruny Island is to some extent a victim of those economic, social, environmental and political features that characterize thinly populated, isolated jurisdictions. However, there is some room for manoeuvre. Baldacchino (2000: 68) challenges the notion of small island vulnerability and identifies comparative advantages - for example, limited exploitable resources can lead to a resourcefulness "which confirms that necessity is the mother of invention". Well-defined boundaries allow easier monitoring of tourist arrivals and provide research opportunities across a range of disciplines. Islands can also limit tourist numbers through access and infrastructure management (such as ferry capacity and frequency). Difficult access to Bruny Island has and can continue to constrain development, since materials need to be ferried across. Defined boundaries also present opportunities for better environmental management, quarantine, branding of both island produce (as with King Island, Tasmania) and of the island itself as a unique tourism destination. Islandness can be a source of resilience in terms of shaping identity and sense of place. In coping with isolation, islanders are often described as self-sufficient people, and this seems to apply as well to permanent residents of Bruny, as noted above in the survey results, and by an interview respondent:

> *People need to be self-reliant as there is little infrastructure. There is no public transport; a higher cost of living; the long distance to travel for basic commodities* (RR3).

Community visioning presents an opportunity for Bruny residents to articulate the environmental and social values that are important to them. Integration of these visions into local governance policies and plans can help to build resilience. This does not mean resisting change altogether, but making appropriate decisions in regard to sustainable development. Resilience involves the capacity of humans to anticipate and plan for the future (The Resilience Alliance, 2005). Hence, the importance of both islander visioning, and effective planning and management:

> *If Council sets the right direction and locals set the right direction, they can get a good sustainable outcome* (RD1).

With its proximity to a metropolitan centre, island appeal, and low population, Bruny Island is on the brink of falling victim to development that destroys local values. However, it is also on the brink of possibility, as an example of a community that can influence change and define its future (particularly through utilizing the advantages that islandness confers); yet, to a large extent this now hinges on whether the mainland-based local government recognizes the distinct challenges and opportunities that face Bruny Island, and that differentiate the island from its adjacent mainland.

Postscript: In mid-November 2006, Kingborough Council (2006e) released a report for public input on the review of the Kingborough Planning Scheme. This comprises proposed amendments to Desired Future Character Statements (DFCS), which provide a basis for 'place-based planning' and a guide to future development and land use. Public consultation outcomes have translated into broad DFCS statements in the document, to be included within a new Schedule in the Planning Scheme. The proposed DFCS also reflect the Bruny vision survey results. The inclusion of distinct DFCS for Bruny augurs that Kingborough Council recognizes the island's unique identity; yet, whether such statements will actually guide future development remains to be seen.

References

Ames, S.C. (ed.) (1993) *A Guide to Community Visioning: Hands-on Information for Local Communities*, Portland, Oregon Visions Project, American Planning Association.

Ames, S.C. (2001) 'Community Visioning: Building a Strategic Vision for the Future', Keynote Address, Society of Local Government Managers Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) 'Basic Community Profile, Bruny Island', *2001 Census Community Profile Series,* Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.

Baldacchino, G. (2000) 'The Challenge of Hypothermia: A Six-proposition Manifesto for Small Island Territories', *The Round Table,* Vol. 89, No. 353, pp. 65-79.

Baldacchino, G. (2004) 'Autonomous but not Sovereign? A Review of Island Sub-nationalism', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism,* Vol. 31, Nos. 1-2, pp. 77-91.

Baldacchino, G. (in press, 2007) 'Islands and Bridges: A Strained Relationship' in G. Baldacchino (ed.) *Bridging Islands: The Impact of Fixed Links*, Canada, Acorn Press.

Baum, T. (1997) 'The Fascination of Islands: A Tourist Perspective' in D. G. Lockhart & D. Drakakis-Smith (eds.) *Island Tourism: Trends and Prospects*, London, Pinter, pp. 21-35.

Biernacki, P. & Waldorf, D. (1981) 'Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling', *Sociological Methods & Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 141-163.

Bruny Tourism Inc. (2006) 'Mission Statement - Bruny Tourism Inc.', The Penguin Cafe on Bruny, www.penguincafe.com.au/BTI.htm.

Clark, E., Johnson, K., Lundholm, E. & Malmberg, G. (in press, 2007) 'Island Gentrification and Space Wars' in G. Baldacchino (ed.) *A World of Islands: An Island Studies Reader*, Malta and Canada, Agenda Academic & Institute of Island Studies.

Cohen, A. P. (1987) *Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

eChoice (2005) 'eChoice Home Loan Bulletin Edition 58', eChoice Pty Ltd, www.echoice.com.au/servlet/HomeLoanInfo?pn=/homebuyercentre/bulletin/index.

Geoscience Australia (2004) 'Islands', March 11th, Commonwealth of Australia, www.ga.gov.au/education/facts/landforms/largisle.htm.

Glass, R. (1964) *London: Aspects of Change*, London, Centre for Urban Studies and MacGibbon & Kee.

Grant, M. (2004) 'Innovation in Tourism Planning Processes: Action Learning to Support a Coalition of Stakeholders for Sustainability', *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 219-237.

Haward, M. & Zwart, I. (2000) 'Local Government in Tasmania: Reform and Restructuring', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 59, No. 3, pp. 34–48.

Ioannides, D. & Holcomb, B. (2003) 'Misguided Policy initiatives in Small Island Destinations; Why do Up-market Tourism Policies fail?', *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 39-48.

Kingborough Council (2006a) 'Economic and Finance Committee Agenda 16 January 2006', *Kingborough Council,* www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Agenda_No__1____16th_January_2006public.pdf

Kingborough Council (2006b) 'Community Development and Arts Committee Agenda January 2006', *Kingborough Council*, www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/COUNCIL_AGENDA1.pdf.

Kingborough Council (2006c) 'A Vision for Bruny Island', *Kingborough Council*, May, www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Bruny_Island_Vision_Survey.pdf.

Kingborough Council (2006d) 'Evaluation of Responses: A Future Vision Plan for Bruny Island'**,** *Kingborough Council*, August, www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Bruny_Vision_Survey_results.pdf.

Kingborough Council (2006e) 'Review of Kingborough Planning Scheme 2000: Phase 1 Report', *Kingborough Council*, www.kingborough.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/PHASE1REPTlatesept_report.pdf

Kohn, T. (2002) 'Becoming an Islander through Action in The Scottish Hebrides', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 143-158.

Lazaridis, G., Poyago-Throtoky, J. & King, R. (1999) 'Islands as Havens for Retirement Migration: Finding a Place in Sunny Corfu' in R. King & J. Connell (eds.) *Small Worlds, Global Lives: Islands and Migration*, London, Pinter, pp. 297-320.

Ley, D. (1994) 'Gentrification and the Politics of the New Middle Class', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 53-74.

Ley, D. (2003) 'Artists, Aestheticization and the Field of Gentrification', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 12, pp. 2527-2544.

Lockhart, D.G. (1997) 'Islands and Tourism: An Overview' in D.G. Lockhart & D. Drakakis-Smith (eds.) *Island Tourism: Trends and Prospects,* London, Pinter, pp. 3-20.

Marshall, J. (1999) 'Insiders and Outsiders: The Role of Insularity, Migration and Modernity in Grand Manan, New Brunswick' in R. King & J. Connell (eds.) *Small Worlds, Global Lives: Islands and Migration*, London, Pinter, pp. 95-113.

Marshall, J. (2001) 'Women and Strangers: Issues of Marginalization in Seasonal Tourism', *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 165-186.

Phillips, M. (2005) 'People in the Centre? The Contested Geographies of 'Gentrification'' in M. Phillips (ed.) *Contested Worlds: An Introduction to Human Geography,* Aldershot, Ashgate, pp. 317-351.

Planning SA (2006) 'Provisional Green Light for KI Tourism Development', 19th October.

Royle, S.A. (2001) *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity*, London, Routledge.

Ruhanen, L. (2004) 'Strategic Planning for Local Tourism Destinations' *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 239-253.

Stratford, E. (2006) 'Technologies of Agency and Performance: Tasmania *Together* and the Constitution of Harmonious Island Identity', *Geoforum*, Vol. 37, pp. 273-286.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks CA, Sage.

Tasmanian Government (2005) 'Improvements for Bruny Island Ferry Parking', Media release, 31 March, Hobart, Tasmanian Government.

The Resilience Alliance (2005) 'Resilience', *The Resilience Alliance*, www.resalliance.org/576.php.

Tourism Tasmania (1998) *1997 Intrastate Travel Survey*, Hobart, Tourism Tasmania, www.tourismtasmania.com.au/research/intrastatereport97.htm

Tourism Tasmania (2006) *Tasmanian Visitor Survey,* Hobart, Tourism Tasmania, http://webreporter.asteroid.com.au/webreporter/ttreports/

UNESCO & Contributors (2004) 'Adapting to Change: Resilience in Small Islands', *Wise Coastal Practices for Sustainable Human Development Forum*, January, www.csiwisepractices.org/?read=485.

Vowles, G. (2006) 'Dream Homes banish the Tassie Shack', *Sunday Tasmanian*, 8 January, p. 22.

Waller, S.E. (2003) 'Story-Telling and Community Visioning: Tools for Sustainability', background paper for State Sustainability Strategies, Perth, Sustainability Policy Unit, Department for the Premier and Cabinet, www.sustainability.dpc.wa.gov.au/docs/BGPapers.