

AGRITOURISM GUIDE FOR REGULATORS

RED COW
ORGANICS



Image courtesy of Tasmanian Partner Toolkit

TASMANIAN





TABLE CAPE TULIP FARM

What is agritourism?

Definitions of agritourism differ from place to place throughout the world. In Tasmania, agritourism is defined as an activity that enables a visitor to gain a deeper understanding of our agricultural sector and the source of our produce by experiencing the producer, produce and place. The benefits to Tasmania of a strong agritourism sector go beyond growing the visitor economy: the sector is playing a role in growing our export market and supporting the Tasmanian brand.

Agritourism experiences are generally those in which a tourist visits a farm or producer to learn more about their property, farming activity or produce. This could include guided tours with hands-on elements, education, cellar doors, cooking lessons, curated meals, on-farm accommodation, tours of heritage farming properties and homesteads, food festivals and produce markets.

An agritourism experience does not have to involve visitors being hands-on with the primary industry that is occurring on the land. Often because of safety and hygiene protocols, visitors are prevented from being able to fully participate in primary production activities. As a result, agritourism activities may be a 'curated' experience.

Agritourism proposals

In Tasmania, most agritourism businesses are small scale. Often, they are mum-and-dad type producers and landowners. Tasmania is known as a place of 'boutique cottage industry businesses' that deliver unique and high-quality experiences and products. These small-scale experiences do a lot of the heavy lifting in attracting visitors to stay and spend in Tasmania outside of urban areas and therefore have a disproportionate positive effect.

The regulatory burden on these small-scale operators is proportionally high. Agritourism businesses often have little direct experience with approvals and have limited capital resources. Agritourism businesses are being provided with materials and information that outline potential approvals required to establish their operation and are being encouraged to engage with regulators, particularly local councils, early on.

However, be mindful they may not be aware of all the regulators or officers, they might need to contact to gain approval. As a regulator, you might need to point them in the right direction. The approach adopted in administering regulatory requirements can make a significant difference to how well the system supports an enabling environment for the Tasmanian visitor economy.

How can you help as a regulator?

During the 2022 Tasmanian Agritourism Regulatory Mapping and Reform Project, which this guide is informed by, a common theme arising from discussions with agritourism businesses was the desire for regulators to provide greater assistance in navigating regulations.

Specific ways in which regulators can assist agritourism businesses are listed below:


1. Try to maintain an 'enabling' mindset. The Tasmanian Agritourism Regulatory Mapping and Reform Project found that proponents felt regulatory officers adopted a strong enforcement attitude and this significantly affected the way they experienced the regulatory approvals process. While being objective and delivering on your role as a regulator, consider how you can also adopt approaches that help businesses get their doors open.
2. Encourage potential proponents to get all their ideas down in writing, put together a plan, and then to seek pre-application advice. Where possible provide preliminary advice processes whether that be through pre-application meetings or written preliminary advice. Some regulators already do this. Some regulators, where there is resourcing capacity, also maintain staffing rosters to deal with enquiries as part of their customer service.
3. Keep in mind that proponents don't understand the internal workings of regulators and that they often don't realise that on a single issue they may need to get advice from multiple officers or multiple referral agencies. A common example that arose through the Tasmanian Agritourism Regulatory Mapping and Reform Project were agritourism businesses not realising they needed to talk to both a council planner and environmental health officer about holding events or functions or requirements to provide a food service. For regulators that have multiple functions, ensuring that your regulatory officers have a broad understanding of all requirements, even if they are not responsible for assessing those, can help in making sure proponents are pointed in the right direction. Have easily available information on your website on who to talk to, if possible.
4. For Planning Authorities, keep in mind that the machinery provisions and language in a planning scheme are very technical and can be very difficult for a proponent to navigate by themselves. Agritourism businesses can benefit particularly from help in understanding what different use classes may be available to them and how they can potentially do an occasional element as an 'ancillary and



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- subservient' component of a use. They can also benefit from understanding that the location chosen on a site can have a big impact on how many planning scheme requirements must be met, due to the application of overlays.
5. Word written requests for information to proponents in plain English as far as practical. Agritourism proponents can struggle to understand what is required of them when quoted lengthy statutory requirements.
 6. Encourage your regulatory staff to get a better understanding of the primary production industry and agritourism. Additionally for councils as regulators, sharing knowledge and experience between different regulators with similar issues can be enormously beneficial, for those who do not already do so.

Image courtesy of Samuel Shelley



Tasmania is the
antidote to the
straitjacket of
modern life.

Tourism Tasmania brand position

ANA PIMENTA, CATTLE FARMER

7. Keep in mind that many Agritourism businesses are simultaneously running an underlying primary production business 5 to 7 days a week and managing the agritourism project after hours. Many agritourism proponents are pursuing their project as a financial necessity and not just as a creative or passion project.
8. For Council based regulatory staff, talk to your Council's economic development area to understand what they are promoting and supporting, so that you are aware of what types of agritourism proposals may be coming up.
9. Keep in mind that many regulatory requirements are open to interpretation or there are several options available, including the requirements of Australian Standards. Agritourism businesses also need to understand where they can tailor their proposal to avoid expensive compliance solutions. A common example that arose through the Tasmanian Agritourism Regulatory Mapping and Reform Project was around food service and kitchen requirements that allow businesses to deliver a solution without the expense of building a commercial kitchen.
10. Ensure websites and instructions are written in plain English, using simple language. This is particularly important for information about relevant regulatory process. Be as transparent as possible about what steps, timeframes and costs are likely or potentially involved.
11. Point businesses to the Tasmanian Agritourism Toolkit: Navigating the Regulatory Process to help improve their knowledge and access to information.

**WE'RE ALSO HELPING
BUSINESSES TO ENGAGE
BETTER WITH REGULATORS
– THE 'TASMANIAN
AGRITOURISM TOOLKIT:
NAVIGATING THE REGULATORY
PROCESS' CONTAINS A
SECTION DEDICATED TO
ENGAGING WITH REGULATORS.**

Policy context

The tourism industry is a significant economic contributor to Tasmania. In September 2022, the industry directly and indirectly contributed around \$2.25 billion to the gross state product (6 per cent), and supported approximately 33,600 jobs. The value of tourism jobs is higher in Tasmania than other states and territories and are very important to Tasmanians outside the major urban centres.

Tasmania is known for its quality products and produce. The T21 Visitor Economy Strategy (T21 Strategy) identifies agritourism as a competitive advantage for Tasmania that is yet to be fully realised. It recognises there is a need to better understand the experience of agritourism operators and producers, and how operational compliance, costs and approval timeframes could be reduced.

The T21 Strategy outlines a plan to promote and grow opportunities for existing and emerging agritourism businesses, based on the understanding that visitors are increasingly drawn to Tasmania to experience the wild and rugged natural landscape, and premium produce and beverages.

It is a key policy objective of the Tasmanian Government through the T21 Strategy as well as the specific Agritourism Strategy 2019 to:

- drive investment in new agritourism experiences including helping agricultural businesses engage with agritourism
- develop and implement planning reform in Tasmania to assist the development of agritourism initiatives.

In response to the T21 Strategy, the Accelerating Agritourism 'Opening the Gate' project was launched in 2021 to help farmers, food producers and existing agritourism businesses to explore and embrace new agritourism opportunities to diversify, amplify, value-add, and connect with visitors.

The team for this project, works with local producers to help them to open their farm gate, develop new market opportunities for their business and realise the potential of agritourism. As a result of that work, you may receive enquiries seeking assistance in identifying the approvals required for new or expanded agritourism operations.

Tourism in Tasmania and the Tasmanian brand

Tasmania is known for its wild places, clean air, premium produce, and as a tourism destination. Tourism Tasmania is the peak marketing body responsible for promoting Tasmania as a visitor destination. Brand Tasmania is a state-funded statutory organisation responsible for the Tasmanian brand across all industries including tourism. These two state organisations have developed a brand strategy and guidelines relevant to the tourism industry.

Understanding these guidelines may be helpful in providing context to the type of agritourism proposals that you will be seeing and considering. The Tasmanian Government will be working to ensure that the regulatory environment is as supportive as possible for agritourism activities that promote the Tasmanian brand.

For more information about Tourism Tasmania's brand information sheet, visit www.tourismtasmania.com.au/siteassets/documents/brand-information-sheet.pdf

To learn more about the Tasmanian brand and access the Tasmanian brand toolkit, visit toolkit.tasmanian.com.au



Image courtesy of Moon Cheese Studio

SQUIZZY TAYLOR, ROCK LOBSTER FISHING

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