



*Institute for
the Study of
Social Change*

Wednesday 31 July 2019

New app to help fire-affected Huon Valley businesses recover

A new app launched today will promote Tasmania's Huon Valley as a tourist destination and help understand how the 2019 bushfires affected visitation.

The University of Tasmania has partnered with the Huon Valley Council and a licence holder for the University's Tourism Tracer technology, Gulliver, to produce the new app named "Huon Valley", which has been designed to promote attractions in the region and, at the same time, track tourist movement.

University of Tasmania Associate Professor Anne Hardy said the devastating bushfires hit parts of the Huon Valley hard, particularly the temporary closure of the Tahune Airwalk.

More than 100 businesses are featured on the app, which includes special offers, discounts and detailed itineraries to help visitors explore the Huon region.

"We believe this app will provide significant benefits for the Huon Valley. It will help stimulate dispersal through the region, assist tourists with finding their way around and help the tourism industry in understanding where tourists are going, following the fires," Associate Professor Hardy said.

"The data on tourists' movement collected from the app will be analysed by the University of Tasmania and can be synced with data that the Tourism Tracer research team collected prior to the fires in 2016, 2017 and 2018."

One business affected by the fires is Home Hill Winery, whose pinot noir grapes have been smoke-tainted and are unable to be used in the production of its award-winning wines.

Home Hills Winery Director Rosemary Bennett believes it will be at least two years before the winery sees any recovery in sales due to depletion, which is down by 50% in some markets.

"The impact of the bushfires is already showing on our visitor numbers and with the Tahune Airwalk closed we are noticing a huge decline in visitors through our door," Ms Bennett said.

"The new app is going to benefit our business and will be a wonderful tool for tourists to find our winery and also assist us to track where our customers are coming from, hence, enable us to identify where our advertising dollars are successful in promoting our business."

Ms Bennett is also president of A Taste of the Huon Festival, which was held in March, and said the outpouring of good spirit from Tasmanians concerned about the region ensured the festival was the most successful in 27 years.

Professor Kate Darian-Smith, Executive Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Arts, Law and Education at the University of Tasmania said the research gives the Huon region highly detailed insights into the impact the fires, and the recovery, has had on traveller behaviour.

“The College of Arts, Law and Education is committed to undertaking place-based tourism research. We hope this will help operators with their future marketing efforts and assist the Council in determining where infrastructure improvements are needed,” Professor Darian-Smith said.

Huon Valley Mayor Bec Enders said the app has the potential to provide accessible information for visitors to better understand what the region has to offer, and in return generate greater profit for local businesses through longer stays and increased spending during their visits.

“This is a great tool that provides Council and industry with a better understanding of why people are visiting the area. Gulliver’s Huon Valley app is an online tool that will help us tailor for economic growth in the Valley,” Mayor Enders said.

“We are thrilled to be a part of this new initiative, and excited to see where this project and partnership leads to into the future.”

Associate Professor Hardy said the project is the second initiative undertaken by the University, in conjunction with the College of Arts, Law and Education and the Institute for the Study of Social Change to help the tourism industry in Tasmania, following the fires.

The first was a highly successful Fire Forum held in May, which brought together over 60 stakeholders and was led by an internationally renowned tourism crisis recovery expert, Dr Gabby Walters.

Associate Professor Hardy said the results of the app tracking are expected to be delivered to the Huon Valley Council at the end of 2019.

The Huon Valley app can be downloaded from the Apple iTunes store or the Google Play store.

Media contact: Tahnia Creedon, tahnia.creedon@utas.edu.au or 0409 234 956.

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office
University of Tasmania
+61 3 6226 2124
Media.Office@utas.edu.au
[Twitter.com/utas_newsroom](https://twitter.com/utas_newsroom)