

# A collection of Strong Ideas



## **Rebrand Tasmania**

Stage One Findings – January, 2010

# Overview



**The response we encountered in the first 6 weeks was overwhelming, with in excess of 700 active participants, nearly 10,000 page views from all over the world and media coverage on ABC State Radio, Edge Radio, The Mercury as well as a swag of design websites, blogs and twitter feeds.**

**The intention of the first phase of the project was to throw the discussion open to a full range of ideas, which could ultimately inform the design brief that accompanies this document.**

**We have tapped into a rich mix of opinions on a broad range of topics, all of which we value and greatly appreciate.**

# What We Discovered

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**As an experimental process of public involvement, we have learnt along the way that some aspects of the strategic branding process are easier to draw opinions on than others.**

Whilst general notions of state identity or issues of colour and symbolism struck a chord with a broad audience, more specific marketing discussion on things such as brand values and competitor analysis not surprisingly, were of less interest.

We did attempt at times to sway the debate towards the areas of information needed to develop a brand of this kind, but as a truly democratic process, we have embraced the responses given wholeheartedly and aim to drive the creative development based on what was most important to our contributors.

We have a mountain of thoughts, opinions and data to digest and summarise in this document. For the sake of simplicity, we've distilled all the feedback thus far into 5 key considerations:



Our heart and soul



How we want to be seen



The tale of the Thylacine



The plight of the Tassie Devil



Looking beyond symbolism

01

# Our heart and soul

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A common question we asked contributors was:  
“What do you think is the heart and soul of Tasmania?”

We posed this question, knowing it was a valuable, yet abstract and difficult notion to pin down. The responses differed broadly but the common themes were the:

1. Distinctive mix of people
2. Relaxed lifestyle
3. Unique sense of heritage and environment

**“It’s the people. Every time I talk to someone from the mainland, they can’t believe how much time people have for each other here. You’ll be driving up the road and people will give you a wave, or they’ll stop in the middle of the road and they’ll say g’day.”**

**David Foster OAM, World Champion Axemen.**

**“The heart and soul of Tasmanian, in my opinion, is our lifestyle; that is what attracts people here as visitors and settlers. The fact of the matter is, they come because we have a unique style of living, which is in danger of being lost. It is more than history, which we have an abundance of, but it is how we live. Perhaps we are indeed a little slower than elsewhere, but isn’t that the attraction?”**

**Reg Watson, Historian and Author.**

**“The fundamental characteristic of the Tasmanian experience is that whatever our island and its people are, we are also, and just as extremely, the exact opposite.”**

**Rodney Croome, Gay Activist.**

**“Tasmania appears to be nature in its purest form, i.e. it seems to be perhaps the most neglected and hidden place in the world. For a foreigner it is hard to imagine that there is a population and activities there, which, depending on the needs of Tasmania, can help install different interpretations that pique the interest of viewers.”**

**Sebastian Guerrini, Identity Designer & Researcher, Argentina**

# The Wrap Up



**Ideas of environment, lifestyle, heritage and community overlay to create a sense of true Tasmanian identity. Despite a shared connection to the pioneering days of early Van Diemens Land, it appears Tasmania today lacks one universally recognised notion of identity. Instead, it is a sense of individuality, pride and self-determination, present across our many communities that defines us.**

**It is perhaps the ghost of our pioneering forefathers which lives on through this resilience and strength of conviction? Whether this explains it or not, it's clear that embracing and respecting the full spectrum of opinion will be central to the task of creating a new identity.**

02

## How we want to be seen

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A consensus on how we want to be perceived is a prerequisite for the creation of any effective brand story. Whilst “how” we want to be seen is directly linked to “who” we want to be seen by (to be outlined clearly in the brief), the response overall suggests a collective longing to be viewed as a more mature, confident and independent version of what we already are.

**“If we think about who or what Tassie ‘wishes to be seen to be’ we recognise the search for identity of the juvenile; ‘trying on’ various outfits, fads and friends, searching for a ‘look’ that makes sense. We find this sort of thing endearing in a 14 year old, but after 150 years with the Tassie moniker? Surely she’s got an identity by now?”**

**Neal Haslem, Communication Design Researcher.**

**“We should be far more assertive as Tasmanians, demand State Rights, be more independent in our thought and vision.”**

**Reg Watson, Author and Historian.**

**“As an expat myself I am one of her leading advocates. However, I agree a rebrand is sorely needed. I envisage that a combination of the old and something new would be a step forward.”**

**Tim Beamen, in an excerpt from comments on The Mercury Online, 25th November, 2009.**

**“I think a brand should incorporate a certain optimism, a way forward into the future. It is important that Tasmania’s brand go some way in reflecting its dynamic creative culture, its exquisite environment as well as its present indigenous culture.”**

**Brita Frost, Design Writer and Critic.**

**There was also considerable discussion on the interplay between the Government brand and the new Brand Tasmania initiative.**



Above: Recently launched Brand Tasmania Logo

It is clear that whilst the new Brand Tasmania identity is the primary external face of the state, the Government brand, aside from its core purpose as the ‘delivery of service’ brand, has a support role to play in marketing the state, re-enforcing the shared statement of brand essence “Far From Ordinary”. See below comments from Brand Tasmania:

**“Brand Tasmania executive director Robert Heazlewood said new branding had only just been introduced for use by private enterprise and the tourism industry.**

**He said there were benefits to keeping government branding distinct from general state branding but he agreed that the current logo could do with some work.”**

**Excerpt from the article “Call to rebrand Tasmania”,  
The Mercury, November 24th, 2009**

# The Wrap Up



**Tasmania sees itself as a land of both pure perfection and unfulfilled opportunity. This dichotomy creates an ongoing tension between conservation/development and tradition/innovation. The new identity must go some way towards harmonising these opposing perspectives, to create a symbol of unity.**

**In addition, it is proposed that the Brand Tasmania strategy be more closely examined and understood, to ensure the two brands are aligned effectively.**

03

# The tale of the Thylacine

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All of the discussion on this topic essentially aligned with one of the following viewpoints:

1. The Thylacine is a symbol of our own environmental recklessness
2. The Thylacine is a powerful embodiment of Tasmanian heritage and values
3. In the absence of a better idea, the Thylacine is probably the best symbol we have

## —The tale of the Thylacine

Despite the Thylacine having been declared extinct, in our poll we found most people believe it to be possible that somehow, somewhere, the Tassie Tiger lives on.

### Poll # 1 Results

**Background:** The last confirmed Thylacine died in the Hobart Zoo in 1936. Since then over 3,800 sightings have been reported to the Australian Rare Fauna Research Association. In spite of these claims, in 1986 the Thylacine was declared extinct by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

**Do you believe it's possible that the Tassie Tiger still roams wild today?**

Yes (54%)



No (46%)



This was somewhat surprising and suggests that the power of the “myth” surrounding the Thylacine should not be underestimated. Could it be that we are unable to separate the scientific probability of the animal surviving from the alluring symbol of hope, enchantment and mystery that the Thylacine embodies?

In relation to the issue of symbolism, several of the responses shared a similar perspective of Artist John Vella that “...the notion of branding anything with something extinct is bizarre – especially when it pertains to the erasure of indigenous fauna”. This view often surfaced as a quite literal and rational response, and is probably best understood in the context of a rising mainstream awareness of environmental issues. According to Clemenger Tasmania’s “State of Tasmania” report, in 2009 over 64% of Tasmanian’s polled agreed with the statement “I am an environmentalist at heart”.

Another interesting idea that arose several times was that the symbolic power of the Thylacine resides within the distinctive stripes. It was proposed that they represent the vivid contrasts between personalities, beliefs, experiences and landscapes that give Tasmania its true personality.

# The Wrap Up



**Whilst a rational argument can be put forward as to why the Thylacine should be replaced as state symbol, this can be strongly counter-balanced by the emotive power of the myth. To add another layer of complexity, in the context of a brand identity, the interpretation of these factors will be heavily influenced by the graphic representation of the Thylacine. The depiction and symbolic meaning of the Tiger's stripes must also be given specific consideration.**

**Therefore, it is proposed that the fate of the Thylacine as a state symbol be decided by public vote, taking it forward as one potential design option, factoring in all of the above.**

04

# The plight of the Tassie Devil

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The topic of whether the Tasmanian Devil should be transformed into our new state symbol created a fiercely polarised debate. The main point of contention was around whether replacing an extinct animal with one that may soon be extinct would be a sensible decision.

**“Perhaps the Tasmanian Devil should be adopted in lieu of the tiger, particularly as it is now known world-wide through overseas entertainment exposure.”**

**Reg Watson, Author and Historian.**

**“Yes it would be a fantastic change it will increase the interest in the devil and may help the devil fight back.”**

**Comment from Jason on the blog.**

**“So replace an extinct animal with one that’s about to be?”**

**Tim, comment from The Mercury online.**

In response to our poll on the topic, a majority of respondents were in favour of replacing the Thylacine with the Tasmanian Devil.

## **Poll # 4 Results**

**Do you think the Tasmanian Devil would be an appropriate replacement symbol for the Tasmanian Tiger?**

Yes (53%)



No (47%)



# The Wrap Up



**Given the strong in-principle support, it is hard to ignore the Tassie Devil as a potential new state symbol. However, to be a successful and meaningful statement of identity it would need to be part of a strong commitment by Government to ensure the Tasmanian Devil population survives the current facial tumour disease outbreak.**

**In addition, it will be important to explore how the Devil works visually as a symbol. We must consider how well it can represent the values and personality traits that define us, something that is yet to be explored. It is proposed that this idea be developed as a design option for further consideration.**

05

## Looking beyond symbolism

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Based on our research, the Thylacine, Tassie Devil and silhouette of Tasmania are undoubtedly the three most widely utilised and recognised symbols of state identity. Whilst symbolism is a fertile area of discussion and is central to any design outcome, in the broader toolkit available to the identity designer working on a logo, it is only one of many areas to consider such as typography, colour, composition or structure, the illustrative approach and the possibility of a tagline.

When asked in a poll whether we can look past these three well-used symbols, an even split of respondents believed we either could use no symbol at all or we should use one of the existing three. A very small minority believed there may be a better symbol we could use.

## Poll #5 Results

**Background:** The Thylacine, Tasmanian Devil and stylised map of the state are the three most heavily used symbols of Tasmanian identity.

**Do you think we can look past these for our new identity?**

No (47%)



Yes, I think we can brand ourselves successfully without using a symbol (47%)



Yes, I have a better idea for a symbol (6%)



Following on from this result we put up an article that looked at how a type-only solution could work. This gathered some interesting responses, validating it as a viable option for design development.

## —Looking beyond symbolism

When we first started looking at the current Government brand with a critical design eye, one of the elements that struck us as odd was the choice of colours. Whilst apparently inspired by the Tasmanian environment, it seemed to lack any sense of the lushness, fertility or positive experience that we believed it should evoke. As Duncan Hose put it:

“The palette for ‘explore the possibilities,’ black/ white/peuce/cobalt’ is unforgivable. I accept that it’s going for a native grass/Southern ocean two part harmony, which is at least earnest, but these two things are supported by billions of other colours and are themselves rarely the same colour twice on a given day.”

Looking back to the earlier Ian Kidd designed identity, we see a much deeper, richer, forest green, in line with what could be considered a more stereotypical, positive representation of the Tasmanian environment. Given the emotive power and subjective nature of colour, we decided to challenge our assumptions and put the green from the current and former identities to the test, along with two other shades of green, selected by our design team.

## Poll #6 Results

**Background:** A very important aspect of any brand identity is the colour palette. Whilst it must firstly appeal to the eye, it’s also important that it evokes positive feelings and develops symbolic meaning over time.

**Which of these colours depicts a positive representation of Tasmanian wilderness and landscape in your eyes?**

Pantone 389 (33%)



Pantone 375 (27%)



Pantone 568 (23%)



Pantone 618 (17%)



As shown above, the two new colours selected polled first and second, followed by the original Ian Kidd forest green and the current colour clearly last, confirming initial suspicions.

Following much negative feedback on the current tagline “Explore The Possibilities”, it was decided that the usefulness or otherwise of a tagline should be investigated. Prior to starting the project, the design team had consulted with a Victorian team who had recently overseen a major place-branding project. Their view, which was in harmony with our initial instincts, was that a tagline could often be a politically driven statement, employed primarily to sell the government of the day’s vision. By embodying a partisan message, the tagline gives the identity a shelf life, which often results in a change of identity with the change of government. This seemed in a slightly old-fashioned marketing approach and one that appeared at odds with our aim of building a brand for the people. Having seen the recent QLD and NSW identities, both of which employed no tagline, we decided to test whether a tagline indeed had merit.

**Background:** According to their brand identities, Victoria is “The Place To Be” and Tasmania is somewhere to “Explore The Possibilities”. In a different approach, New South Wales and Queensland don’t feature a prominent tagline at all, instead they simply state they are a government.

**Do you think a good State Government tagline could shape your feelings about Tasmania?**



Yes (59%, 64 Votes)



No (41%, 44 Votes)

As shown above, there was a strong majority who believed a “good” tagline could shape their feelings about Tasmania, a result that we believe shows the popular view may be less cynical than the one we initially adopted. Based on this finding, we will keep the option of a tagline open for future consideration.

# The Wrap Up



Whilst the discussion so far has been able to validate the Thylacine, Tasmanian Tiger and to a lesser degree a silhouette of the state as appropriate state symbols, there appears to be some support for exploration outside of this familiar territory. It may be that there is either another symbol that can be explored (such as a convict related graphic as already discussed on the blog) or in fact a purely typographic solution may be viable.

In addition to the information gathered on colour, it is proposed that through the design process the above symbol and tagline options be left open.

# Conclusion



Whilst the process so far has uncovered a valuable base of ideas and opinions on a whole range of issues relating to the rebranding project, it is still only the start of the journey. It is proposed that the above findings be treated as initial observations and should continue to be challenged and validated as we progress through the design process.

Looking beyond the issue specific feedback, there have been some insightful suggestions about what the project should ultimately aim to achieve.

**“The symbol should make us feel uniquely Tasmanian – a symbol that can only be ‘Tasmanian’.**

Elise Archer, Alderman of Hobart City Council.

**“Too many times a place will try to have many voices for many people, but finding the one true thing that makes that place unique over and above the surface offerings is at the heart of place-branding.”**

Jim from Tank Studio, comment on blog.

**“...Tasmania’s future branding should capture in a single, brief, visual moment a certain clarity, uniqueness and optimism.”**

Brita Frost, Design Writer and Critic.

# Conclusion



**In keeping with the above opinions, we believe clarity, uniqueness, optimism, honesty and simplicity should be the guiding principles as we move through the design process.**

**To fully utilise public support, the process must continue to remain open to the full spectrum of opinion, whilst also pushing the boundaries of good design to create a truly single-minded expression of Tasmanian identity.**

**The next step for the project will be to respond to the above findings and attached creative brief and begin development of design options for public review and feedback.**