

RTI 24-25-103

The following has been released in relation to a request for information relating to the Bruny Island Ferry Service.

**From:** Simon Tamlyn **out of scope**  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 17 July 2024 12:29 PM  
**To:** eric.abetz@parliament.tas.gov.au  
**Subject:** Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group (BIFRG)  
**Attachments:** Min\_Ferguson\_Bruny\_Booking\_080221.pdf

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Good Afternoon Minister Abetz,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for Transport & Business, Industry and Resources. It was great to see you in November last year when attending the Rotary Club of Kingborough briefing on the operation of the Bruny Island ferries and taking an interest in how the new infrastructure was coming along and the improvements SeaLink have made to the service since taking over in late 2018.

In my role as Chair of the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group, it was agreed that I would forward on feedback (attached) from 2021 pertaining to the decision on implementation of a booking system for the Bruny Island service that was provided to Minister Ferguson at that time. As the meeting held yesterday, it was still their view to oppose a booking system. I must stress this is not the view of myself or SeaLink however we are open to discussions on what this looks like longer term.

I would welcome a meeting in due course to discuss your views on a booking system and I am aware there has been certain representations from Destination Southern Tasmania around the viability of a fourth ferry.

If you could acknowledge receipt of this email in due course so I can advise the BIFRG members that it has been received.

Kind Regards,

Simon

Simon Tamlyn  
 General Manager – Tasmania

E **out of scope**  
 M **out of scope**  
 A 79 Ferry Road, Kettering TAS 7155



[sealink.com.au](http://sealink.com.au)

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The Hon. Michael Ferguson  
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport  
Parliament House  
HOBART 7000 Tasmania

Via email: [michael.ferguson@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:michael.ferguson@dpac.tas.gov.au)

CC: Trevor Adams OAM, Chairperson, Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group: **out of scope**  
Gary Swain, Transport Commissioner, Department of State Growth: [gary.swain@stategrowth.tas.gov.au](mailto:gary.swain@stategrowth.tas.gov.au)  
Tania Matthews, General Manager, SeaLink Bruny Island: **out of scope** [@sealink.com.au](mailto:tania@sealink.com.au)

**RE: PROPOSED BOOKING SYSTEM FOR THE BRUNY ISLAND FERRY**

Dear Minister,

Please find enclosed a statement from the Bruny Island community and tourism industry in relation to the proposed Bruny Island Ferry booking system. The statement has been jointly prepared by the community and local business representatives on the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group (BIFRG). It has been endorsed by the following Bruny Island community and industry organisations, reflecting an unprecedented level of whole-of-Island consensus:

- Bruny Island Community Association (Committee)
- Bruny Island Tourism
- Friends of North Bruny
- Bruny Island Environment Network
- CWA Bruny Island
- Bruny Island Boat Club

The Chairperson of the BIFRG, Mr Trevor Adams, was also consulted in the preparation of the statement.

The statement formally requests that the Tasmanian Government and SeaLink agree to remove the contractual requirement for SeaLink to implement a booking system on the Bruny Island Ferry. We request that you facilitate this outcome.

We understand the booking system concept was well-intentioned, and we have considered all of the information put forward by the Department of State Growth and SeaLink in good faith. The plain fact is that a booking system will result in net negative outcomes across all ferry user groups.

Our detailed findings are set out in the enclosed statement, but in short, a booking system on the Bruny Island Ferry will be inefficient, inequitable, impractical and will decrease productivity. In addition to creating an inconvenient and costly burden for all residents and ratepayers, it will negatively impact local tourism and hospitality businesses that are just beginning the long recovery from COVID-19.

The problems that a booking system was designed to address are being managed by SeaLink within the framework of the current queuing system. In addition, the welcome investment by the State Government in landside infrastructure at Kettering and Roberts Point – including dual ramps – will enable SeaLink to provide sufficient capacity to meet future demand.

We appreciate the State Government is focused on achieving evidence-based outcomes for Tasmanians in common sense, practical ways. In the context of the Bruny Island Ferry Service, this will be achieved by retaining the current queuing system while maximising ferry capacity.

We look forward to your response. We are also able to arrange a delegation of community and business representatives to meet with you at your convenience. For the purposes of coordination, please contact BIFRG member **out of scope**

Yours sincerely,

**out of scope**

*Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group members*

8 February 2021

Bruny Island residents, ratepayers, local businesses and community organisations.

## *Statement in relation to proposed Bruny Island Ferry booking system*

6 February 2021

### **Key Points**

#### ***A clear choice:***

- Bruny Islanders, State Government and the ferry operator (SeaLink) share the common aim of choosing the best ticketing and traffic management systems for all classes of ferry users.
- The current choice is between the existing 'queuing system' and a proposed 'booking system'.
- The 'queuing system' involves vehicles being ticketed and loaded in the order in which they arrive at the ferry terminal.
- The 'booking system' involves users booking and pre-paying (mainly online) to secure priority access to a scheduled transit or departure 'window'. Non-booked users would access stand-by places, when available.

#### ***A consensus view:***

- This document has been jointly prepared and unanimously agreed by the Bruny Island representatives on the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group.
- It is supported by all undersigned Bruny Island community organisations and groups.

#### ***A considered position:***

- The document is presented in three parts: (1) background information on the past two and half years of deliberations; (2) a statement explaining the consensus position of Bruny Islanders and requesting a decision by Government; (3) details about the negative impacts of a booking system identified during community consultations and explored during Reference Group meetings.
- The position adopted by Bruny Islanders is based only on evidence, research and practical experience. It is not influenced by ideology, politics or any external factors. It takes into account the needs of all ferry users.

#### ***In summary:***

- Based on the evidence and information exhaustively considered by the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group, the best overall system across all types of ferry users is the current queuing system.
- The queuing system is simple, low risk and highly efficient when coupled with sufficient ferry capacity. Recent improvements to traffic management, operational planning and terminal infrastructure have already reduced the negative impacts of long queues. New dual ramps will further improve traffic flow and ferry berthing.
- The possible positive impacts of the booking system are outweighed by the identified negative impacts, across all types of users. The negative impacts are detailed in Appendix A. Compared to the current queuing system, a booking system would be less efficient; less equitable; impractical to operate; and would impose barriers to visitation that will harm local businesses and the Island's economy.
- The Bruny Island Ferry is a relatively low cost, short duration, high frequency 'commuter' vehicular ferry service. Vehicular ferry services of this type are unsuited to bookings.
- Each resident household and local businesses typically makes hundreds of ferry transits per year. There is no known public transport service that requires users undertaking a 10-15 minute journey to make hundreds of separate pre-paid advance bookings per year. To do so is impractical, inefficient and has high risk of failure.
- There is no evidence that the limited space available at the Kettering terminal will allow for effective separation of 'booked' and 'non-booked' vehicles, without exacerbating traffic management issues on Ferry Rd.
- For these reasons, and the additional issues set out below, Bruny Islanders request the State Government and SeaLink to agree to remove the contractual requirement for SeaLink to implement a booking system on the Bruny Island Ferry, and for the Minister for Transport to facilitate this outcome.



## **BACKGROUND**

Approximately two and half years ago, Bruny Islanders became aware that the State Government contract for the Bruny Island Ferry required the new operator, SeaLink, to implement a booking system.

The stated aims for changing from the current queuing system to a booking system were:

- A. On 5-10 days per year, mainly coinciding with public holidays, long queues were extending to the Channel Highway at Kettering, causing traffic disruptions and safety issues.
- B. For 5%-10% of total ferry transits over the year, one or more vehicles were unable to board the scheduled transit due to the ferry being 'full', resulting in wait times of between 30-90 minutes for the next transit. This had downstream impacts on passengers being delayed getting to Bruny Island (including for tourism experiences) or getting to Hobart (including for flights and hire car return).
- C. Nearly all queuing and delay issues were concentrated in a morning peak period from Kettering, an afternoon peak period from Roberts Point, and Friday/pre-long weekend evenings from Kettering.
- D. It is challenging for the ferry operator to make decisions about scheduling additional ferries, including standing-up qualified staff, at short notice.

(A) relates to safety and impacts on non-ferry travellers. (B)-(C) relate to the inconvenience of delays for ferry-travellers. (D) relates to ensuring effective and efficient operations. In theory, a booking system would ameliorate these issues by 'spreading' and pre-determining traffic demand. That is, excessive queuing and unexpected delays would be reduced by travellers having to pre-book and arriving at the ferry terminal in a defined booking departure window. In addition, the ferry operator could use forward bookings as an indicator of the number of staff and vessels required to meet demand.

A related argument cited by Department of State Growth representatives was that other ferry services in Australia, including a number operated by SeaLink, utilise a booking system.

From the outset, significant concerns about the negative impacts of a booking system were held by many Bruny Island residents, ratepayers and business owners. Nonetheless, for two and half years, the community and local business representatives on the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group have kept an open mind, seeking information and analysis demonstrating how a booking system would achieve the stated aims without negative impacts on core user groups.

Initially, the booking system was to be implemented in October 2018, when SeaLink commenced operations under the new State Government contract. However, it soon became apparent that the terminal infrastructure at both Kettering and Roberts Point was incompatible with the traffic management required to implement a booking system. Since this time, significant infrastructure works have been undertaken, with the latest addition of dual terminal ramps due to be completed in May 2021. The Department of State Growth is of the stated view that current infrastructure works will remove the final impediments to the implementation of a booking system, and SeaLink (in accordance with their contractual obligations to the State Government) are taking actions to implement a system in 2021. Repeated requests by Bruny Island representatives on the Ferry Reference Group for the State Government not to proceed with a booking system, due to the issues raised in this paper, have been politely declined.

Accordingly, all Bruny Island representatives on the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group believe they now have a responsibility to make a public statement in relation to the booking system, and to seek intervention by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

The views expressed in this statement are based on exhaustive consideration of the issues, including analysis of information on proposed booking systems presented to the Ferry Reference Group, and extensive community consultation.

The statement is endorsed by all the undersigned Bruny Island community organisations.

The community members of the Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group include business owners, permanent residents and shack owners. Collectively, they are members of most Bruny Island community organisations.

## STATEMENT

- The identified negative impacts (see Appendix below) of the proposed booking system for the Bruny Island Ferry far outweigh the possible positive impacts. These negative impacts have been documented and discussed across twenty separate Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group meetings, and other forums.
- The negative impacts of a booking system will affect Bruny Islander residents, ratepayers, business owners, service providers, and visitors. There is no evidence that any sector of ferry user, as a whole, will be better off under a booking system than under the current queuing system.
- Each of the stated aims of the booking system can be addressed in other ways, including:
  - a. active traffic management on very busy days
  - b. improved communication to travellers about busy periods
  - c. close communication with tour operators, primary producers and freight providers
  - d. predictive analysis of seasonal, intra-week and intra-day patterns of travel; and
  - e. (above all) flexible ferry capacity to meet variable demand.

These methods have been increasingly used by SeaLink in 2020-21 and have proved successful. The introduction of dual ramps at the ferry terminals in May 2021 will also improve traffic flow, and eliminate vessel berthing delays.
- The Bruny Island ferry service is a relatively low cost, short duration vehicular transit. Currently, during busy periods, three transits occur hourly from each terminal. Resident households and local businesses typically make 2-10 transits per week. It is more similar to the Noosa, Daintree and Wisemans ferry services (none of which have bookings), than higher cost, longer duration ferries with booking systems (such as Kangaroo Island or Stradbroke Island). In other words, the Bruny Island ferry is inherently unsuited to bookings.
- There is no traffic flow analysis presented to the Ferry Reference Group that demonstrates a booking system would achieve any of its stated aims. Indeed, information presented to the Group suggests that given the infrastructure limitations at both terminals, a system requiring separation of booked and non-booked vehicles may exacerbate traffic management issues, especially on Ferry Rd, Kettering.
- With approximately 10,000 ferry transits per year - and variables such as weather, on-island events, and unscheduled maintenance - it is not possible to eliminate all delays under any system, or any level of viable ferry capacity. While this may be inconvenient at times, it is also an inherent part of travelling via ferry. Nearly all Bruny Islanders, and our visitors, accept that occasional delays are part of 'Island Life'.

Accordingly, there is now a consensus view on Bruny Island that the contractual requirement for SeaLink to implement a booking system should be removed, and instead, less disruptive methods of managing traffic flow should be implemented within the framework of the current queuing system. The community requests the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport to take appropriate actions to implement this change. In addition, the community encourages SeaLink and the State Government to collect, and make public, detailed data on ferry transits, queuing and delays to inform the best methods of maximising traffic flow.

The Bruny Island community has not reached this view because it is opposed to change, or to achieve any ulterior objective. The Bruny Island community has reached this view because every resident, ratepayer and local business has real-life, day-to-day, practical interaction with the ferry service. If there was credible evidence that a booking system would improve the service for all users, it would be supported. It is clear, however, based on all available evidence, that a booking system will result in an inferior service for many users. It is for this reason alone that the community is overwhelmingly opposed to its introduction.

Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group Members	Bruny Island community organisations and groups
	Bruny Island Community Association Inc (Committee) Bruny Island Tourism Inc Friends of North Bruny Inc Bruny Island Environment Network Inc Country Women's Association (Bruny Island Branch) Bruny Island Boat Club Inc

## **APPENDIX A: IDENTIFIED NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF PROPOSED BRUNY ISLAND FERRY BOOKING SYSTEM**

- Resident, ratepayer and local business travel to and from Bruny Island is frequent, and often unpredictable (particularly when returning from Hobart). All users currently travel with the simplicity and surety that they will board the next available ferry upon arrival, in turn. A booking system would create uncertainty and complexity, with the greatest impact on frequent travellers.
- A booking system will be highly reliant upon a smartphone interface and electronic credit/debit card transactions. Bruny Island has significant cohorts of residents that have limited capacity to use this technology. While telephone bookings are proposed, it does not appear that bookings or changes to bookings via telephone would be available after hours, when many residents are travelling.
- The act of 'booking' entails an additional task prior to every transit. Even if this task takes only 3 minutes per booking, for a typical resident making 200 transits per year this is an additional 10 hours of annual ferry-related transactions – far in excess of offset time savings offered by a booking system.
- The process of validating bookings and placing vehicles into correct lanes will require users to be at the ferry terminal at least 20 minutes prior to departure. Currently, under the queuing system, many travellers safely and efficiently board the ferry arriving closer to the scheduled departure time. The increased time spent waiting under a booking system is inefficient and decreases productivity. It will result in more vehicles having to be managed within the terminal area for longer periods of time, and is incompatible with plans to have smaller, faster ferries departing every 20 minutes.
- To prevent people from 'holding bookings', all bookings will require pre-payment. Where a user misses a scheduled booking (such as due to traffic delays in Hobart) they will either suffer a financial penalty, or have to spend additional time negotiating a credit and/or rescheduling. This will particularly impact users travelling many times per year (residents, ratepayers and local businesses).
- In an effort to address the concerns outlined above, the State Government and SeaLink have proposed to reserve a small number of 'unbooked' places on each ferry transit (20% or 5-10 vehicles). This proposal is flawed in a number of ways, including:
  - it creates unresolved and costly logistical complexities at the point of loading, including the need for both 'booked' and 'unbooked' lanes (extending into Ferry Road at Kettering)
  - it undermines the stated aims of the booking system: if it is not necessary for all users to book, what is to prevent many 'unbooked' users arriving at peak times, creating long queues?
  - it creates two classes of users – those who book will get 'priority' boarding, and those who do not book may, or may not, travel on the next or subsequent transits
  - 'unbooked places' would be available to all users, meaning that at busy times residents, visitors and ratepayers would be 'competing' for these spots
  - considering the points above, it appears to be a 'straw man' proposal: in order to avoid being in the unbooked class of users, most residents, ratepayers and local businesses will have to book, notwithstanding the inferior service experience compared to the current system.
- At present, ferry payment transactions are simple: direct payment via cash or card via a single point-of-sale device operated by SeaLink. In a booking system, the transaction becomes more complicated to complete, as digital information has to be conveyed from the traveller's smartphone to the SeaLink attendant, and mobile coverage at Kettering is sub-optimal. It also remains unclear how concession fares will be processed. These issues pose a risk for *increased delays* compared to the queuing system.
- There is no evidence that visitors choose not to come to Bruny Island because of the current queuing system. Consistent year-on-year increases in visitation to the Island pre-COVID – and the strong Tasmanian-based visitation during COVID – provides compelling evidence to the contrary. In fact, a booking system may be a *barrier* to visitation (as discussed below).
- At present, up to 70% of daily visitors to Bruny make a 'day-trip'. It is not practical or desirable for most of these visitors to avoid peak periods – they choose to arrive at Kettering in the period 8-11 am, and depart Roberts Point 3-6 pm, even if this involves an extended wait time. If, however, visitors have to book a ferry during these peak periods and cannot because it is 'fully booked', many will choose not to come to Bruny Island. Nearly all tourism and hospitality businesses on Bruny (excluding accommodation) rely on day-trippers to remain viable, especially as businesses recover from COVID-19.
- To offset the customer uncertainty created by a booking system, larger tourism operators and service providers will be forced to pre-book multiple places on peak ferry services, up to 12 months in advance, further disadvantaging smaller businesses, independent travellers and Bruny Islanders.
- Most overnight accommodation on Bruny Island is run by small, family operations. Under the current queuing system, all visitors can always get to their accommodation, even if occasionally delayed. If, however, these visitors attempt to book the ferry and find that all suitable ferry transits are 'fully booked', local providers will experience increased booking variations and cancellations.



**From:** Simon Tamlyn [out of scope]@sealink.com.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 23 July 2024 4:01 PM  
**To:** [out of scope]  
**Subject:** RE: Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group (BIFRG)

Hi [out of scope]

Thanks for the receipt for community feedback being received.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> of August works perfectly. If you could send me an invitation and details on where to go, that would be great.

Regards,

Simon

Simon Tamlyn  
General Manager – Tasmania

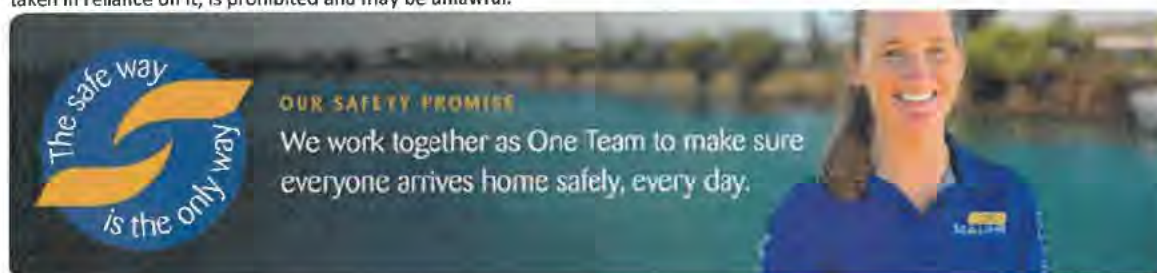
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**From:** [out of scope]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 23, 2024 3:55 PM  
**To:** Simon Tamlyn [out of scope]  
**Subject:** RE: Bruny Island Ferry Reference Group (BIFRG)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Good Afternoon Simon.

Please accept this as acknowledgement of receipt of your letter and Minister Abetz is more than happy to meet with you.

I have placed a HOLD in the diary on:  
Friday 2 August 8:30am

Please let me know if this time is suitable

Kind Regards

out of scope

Office of the Hon Eric Abetz MP  
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources  
Minister for Transport  
Liberal Member for Franklin

Phone: out of scope  
Level 10, 15 Murray Street, Hobart 7000  
[www.premier.tas.gov.au](http://www.premier.tas.gov.au)

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# out of scope

**From:** Simon Tamlyn **Out of scope**  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 6, 2024 8:43 AM  
**To:** eric.abetz@parliament.tas.gov.au  
**Subject:** Post Meeting Follow Up

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Good Morning Minister Abetz,

Thank you very much for the time in your office on Friday, it was great to get some clarity around some of the key decisions regarding the Bruny Island service for the future.

Regards,

Simon

**Simon Tamlyn**  
General Manager – Tasmania

**E** **Out of scope**  
**M** **Out of scope**  
**A** 79 Ferry Road, Kettering TAS 7155



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Released under RTI

Tuesday, 6 August 2024

The Hon. Eric Abetz  
Minister for Transport  
Level 10/15 Murray St  
Hobart TAS 7000

Delivered via email:

Dear Minister Abetz,

I want to sincerely thank you for the meeting to discuss the ongoing operation of the Bruny Island ferries.

As discussed, SeaLink will begin a review of the existing service contract for the removal or change of clauses relating to a booking system which will provide greater future clarity for all. **section 37**

Secondly, SeaLink will undertake work on a proposal to replace The Bowen, which is currently used as a third vessel to back up the two purpose Tasmanian built SeaLink ferries and provide additional capacity during peak days. The Bowen caters for 28 standard size vehicles and a 3<sup>rd</sup> purpose-built vessel would be designed to increase capacity and provide additional services each day due to the reduced travelling and loading time required. **section 37**

SeaLink understands that Destination Southern Tasmania have commissioned an independent study into a fourth ferry for Bruny Island. **section 37**

out of scope



# out of scope

Again, thank you for the positive discussion and support of SeaLink, I really do appreciate it.

SeaLink are committed to working with you and your office on managing the positive announcement regarding the booking system decision and I look forward to continuing our great working relationship with the Tasmanian State Government and in particular, The Department of State Growth.

Yours sincerely,

out of scope

**Simon Tamlyn**  
General Manager  
SeaLink Tasmania

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