

A coherent plan must underpin any city deal

Mercury 12 July 2017

Greater Hobart, not just the inner city and waterfront, needs to be the focus of any City Plan, says **Craig Perkins**

THE burning question that has not been asked about a Hobart City Deal is — what is meant by Hobart and what problem needs to be solved? Both Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Hobart City Council Lord Mayor Sue Hickey have made positive overtures about a federal government City Deal for Hobart. If Hobart were only the city centre and waterfront, then the Hobart City Council is well placed to negotiate an outcome. But Hobart is so much more than that.

City Deals are not just about an infrastructure funding wishlist; this is not just a new funding program. Rather, a City Deal is an overarching governance arrangement

A City Deal is the perfect catalyst to draw together the city's councils and state government to support common outcomes.

to co-ordinate the tens of millions of dollars that all levels of government and other institutions commit to a city year on year. The advantage of a Hobart City Deal package would be the integration of decisions across all levels of government with the place as the focus; not individual departmental or organisational policies. To gain the best outcome, engagement with all Hobart's councils is an integral part of the process. Hobart is not defined by municipal boundaries, but by the residents who choose to live in our largest urban centre.

The lesson from the original British City Deal model, which is clearly evident in the Launceston, Townsville and Greater Western Sydney City Deals, is that they are based on being strongly collaborative through all the levels of government, industry and the community, with a clear vision and purpose.

The strength of a City Deal is that it looks at investment and growth at a scale based on how the city functions and impacts the surrounding region. This geographical scale sits in between the traditional focus of local and state government and is a powerful way to look at the city.

Simplistically, a city is made

up of lots of people who need to move from home to work or play, from business to business, from home to school or university, and visitors who want to experience the uniqueness of a place. A good City Deal encourages investment that supports the movement of people, plans for continued growth, and makes it an attractive place for people to live, work, learn and visit.

Hobart, not unlike other capital cities, is challenged by being made up of multiple

council areas that operate without a clear overarching strategy. A City Deal is the perfect catalyst to draw together the city's councils and state government to support common outcomes for

jobs, education, transport, housing and industry growth. With the strong emphasis on collaboration and innovation, a City Deal offers a perfect mechanism to bring all the pieces together.

Cities can be the engine room for their surrounding region. Decisions on issues such as education or health services have flow-on effects for how a city functions. Transport flows, accessibility, connectivity and liveability are as vital to a city as business investment and economic growth. Right now there is the opportunity to create a City Deal that delivers a shared vision for the people of Hobart, with integrated planning and development. To do so requires leadership and collaborative intent.

Hobart does not need to be granted a City Deal for this work to start. Planning and collaboration can begin right now, and the first question is, what problem are we trying to solve — not what project should be funded. From here on, it will be the cities who are able to put forward a plan complete with partnerships and agreed outcomes that will negotiate a City Deal.

Craig Perkins is the CEO of the Regional Development Australia Tasmania Committee.