

# MERCURY

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## Big time for cable car

**T**HE next few weeks will be pivotal in determining the eventual course of the proposed cable car up kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

The Upper House will at some point consider legislation as to whether to allow the State Government to acquire land, which will then allow the proponent, MWCC, to lodge a development application with the Hobart City Council.

If all goes to plan, it will then advance through the normal planning processes.

But in the first instance, fundamental to this will be how Labor members vote in the Legislative Council.

Their stated position is that they support a cable car development.

But what is yet to be tested is whether or not they will green light the land acquisition.

Their preference would appear to be a process which puts the project out to tender, but it won't become crystal clear until the legislation finally fronts the House.

Either way, it will make for a fascinating debate on a project which has captured the community's imagination — good, bad and indifferent — for decades.

The Mercury's publicly stated position on the cable car is unambiguous and open to neither interpretation nor distortion.

We are supportive of the overall concept but would be highly unlikely to give unequivocal backing to any project of this nature, certainly at this stage of its progress.

From here, a few boxes simply have to be ticked.

For starters, the process must be open and

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transparent and the community engaged from the get go. Secondly, the project needs to have the strong backing of the government of the day, regardless of political persuasion. A project of this scope will not survive without it.

It was for this reason that we were surprised the State Government did not opt to make it a Project of State Significance.

Instead, the legislation now faces a potentially hostile Upper House and, if it passes that, the Hobart City Council which, to date has been less than enthusiastic.

To put it bluntly, it is angry at how it has been perceived to have handled the project to date.

From there, win or lose, the case is more than likely to go to appeal.

The Government and the proponent have both said the land-acquisition process makes redundant the need for it to be labelled a Project of State Significance.

Given the complexities of the process and various agendas involved, it will be interesting to see if they are proven right.

Thirdly, it must have community support.

Finally, it must be financially viable.

This has been one of the biggest question marks against the project, one which has eased somewhat in recent times given some of the names now attached.

Tick all these boxes and you have a project this state can get excited about.

But there is still a way to go and many questions which need to be asked and answered which, given what is at stake, is as it should be.