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THE VOICE OF TASMANIA

# MERCURY

## City future decision time

**A** REPORT to be considered by the Hobart City Council next week could be instrumental in deciding the type of city we want to become.

The council will examine a landmark report by local architect and urban design consultant Leigh Woolley.

The report proposes major restrictions on potential city skyscrapers and looks to add certain criteria on "city-changing" developments.

It comes in the wake of highly controversial plans by the Fragrance a group for a 120m CBD skyscraper.

But in reality the proposed restrictions have been framed by an application by The Palace Hotel development, now known as the Hyatt Centric Hotel, which was approved last year after the original 73m height was reduced by 10m.

Some of the key recommendations include restricting the height of future buildings to no more than 75m and maintaining the city centre as compact with no "individually prominent" developments.

The committee overwhelmingly endorsed the report and agreed to start the proposed amendments to the planning scheme via the Tasmanian Planning Commission — and also to hold a public forum to explain the changes.

These recommendations are the ones upon which the council will vote next Monday.

If passed, they will set an important precedent which could all but rule out future massive skyscraper developments proposed for the centre of the city.

**The Fragrance skyscraper has been opposed by people from all sides of the political spectrum, from tourism leaders, to world-class architects to international authors.**

This will be music to many people's ears.

Not only will it ensure the existing character of the city is maintained (and enhanced by subsequent developments) but it will push such proposals into areas which arguably need them, such as the north-south corridor.

The Fragrance skyscraper has been opposed by people from all sides of the political spectrum, from tourism leaders, to world-class architects to international authors.

It does not appear to have gained much traction in the court of public opinion.

But equally the city will be keen not to portray the image it is closed for business at the same time as we have a dearth of hotel beds, record tourism numbers and unprecedented pressure on our housing market.

The key for international developers is to engage with the community, to attempt to gain a social licence, before launching bold and divisive plans.

Who knows what a Robert Morris-Nunn could come up with if given the opportunity to design a Fragrance Hotel which suits the needs of the developer but remains quintessentially Hobart.

The other unknown in this is the State Government's long-term plans.

If laws to take over planning matters over a certain dollar value materialise, it will be interesting to see how much notice is taken of the council guidelines.

But that is putting the cart before the horse.

Hobart's elected members still need to agree to support the committee recommendations and pass the report.

It all makes for a most intriguing start to next week.