

Compromise a big risk in high-rise debate

Planners must back current building guidelines, says **Andrew Edwards**

THE inevitable appeal of compromise may end up being the biggest danger for all those who are opposed to the high-rise hotel developments planned by the Fragrance Group in Hobart's iconic waterfront precinct.

And in reality, it may be compromise that lies at the heart of the group's strategy.

It's a tactic as old as bargaining itself and an essential weapon in the armoury of every lobbyist and development advocate.

If you know what you really want, ask for something way over the odds and the chances are you'll end up with close to what you want.

That's because in any controversial situation it is human nature for decision-makers to try to strike a compromise.

So how do you compromise on a plan for a 120-metre high hotel in the very heart of Hobart's historic settlement and waterfront precinct? Is it reaching agreement that the hotel should only be half its proposed size? In other words, 60 metres high?

That might sound reasonable, if it were not for the fact that the intention of the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme is for a building to be no more than 18 metres high on the Davey Street site owned by the Fragrance Group. That's one-third even the hypothetical compromise. It's one-sixth the size they are currently proposing. On that basis, any compromise that seeks to flout the intention or the so-called "deemed compliance" heights set out in the planning scheme would be setting one rule for local developers and another for foreign developers.

The situation is much the same for the hotel the Fragrance Group wants to build at the bottom end of Collins Street, literally across the road from the Cenotaph and the Macquarie Point development site. For this area, the intended height of buildings under the planning scheme is 15 metres, yet the proposal is to build a hotel that is 75 metres.

Again, what might be considered a compromise? Is it half that size, say just under 40 metres? That's still a

staggering two-and-a-half times what the planning scheme considers desirable.

Under the scheme, there is the chance for the Hobart City Council to exercise discretion, which means it can allow some level of compromise. But should that be of a magnitude between five and six times greater than that envisaged in the planning scheme?

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HERITAGE: Sullivan's Cove in Hobart.

requirements of the Singapore investment group, would be setting one rule for local developers and another for foreign developers.

Judging from the level of public rejection to date by developers, architects, town planners, celebrities and the general public, it would appear the Fragrance Group has no social licence for building such enormous skyscrapers in the heart of the city's historic centre. That's hardly surprising.

This whole issue hinges on the intelligent interpretation of the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme, which states: "Future development within the Cove should respect the scale of the Cove's built form — new buildings should not be out of scale with neighbouring buildings, or the general character of the Cove." And under the section, Urban Character: "No new development or part of a development is to be individually prominent, particularly when viewed from Sullivans Cove or the River Derwent".

It will be a measure of our council's integrity and resolve that they abide by the planning scheme and reflect the depth of the public's opposition to these two proposed developments.

Andrew Edwards is a prominent Hobart property valuer and a member of the committee responsible for the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme.

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