

MERCURY

Don't let this chance pass

SOME common themes emerged from a fascinating piece in the *Sunday Tasmanian* which, as part of our Future Hobart series, asked some prominent Tasmanians, young and old and from across the political spectrum, what their key priorities would be for our capital city.

First there seemed to be consensus that we need to maintain Hobart's heritage character, the so called "brand" that makes our city and region so special.

There appears plenty of appetite for development, but little tolerance for plans that do not enhance this brand.

Then there was a desire to fix traffic problems with ever increasing congestion a daily frustration for motorists.

From ferries, to bypasses, to cable cars, to light rail to the northern suburbs, to a new Bridgewater bridge, there is clearly a push for significant rather than incremental change.

First and foremost, however, there was identified a push for an overarching plan, a vision, that brings all the pieces of this jigsaw together.

The *Mercury* argues this is a fundamental need for our city and region; and we are clearly not alone in this respect.

It will ensure we have a blueprint for the type of city we hope to become.

It provides a prime opportunity for local and state and governments to work together proactively on a tangible and coherent plan, which could then be presented for funding as a City Deal in the next state or federal election cycle.

The timing also is perfect. The image of Hobart

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and Tasmania as an international destination has never been stronger.

Tourism numbers are at record highs.

The likes of Dark Mofo go from strength to strength. We are at the top of a wave.

The risk is we fail to seize the moment and develop a strategy to make the most of the obvious goodwill.

But it requires leadership, innovation and the capacity for the different groups to work together.

The Hobart City Council is discussing such an approach this week, promoting a potential \$400 million STEM centre as the foundation of any City Deal.

In this space the council continues to talk the talk and walk the walk.

It wants to see progress, it wants to see a deal worked on.

But it cannot work in isolation and needs support from above and below

From here a team comprising community, local, state and federal government representatives should be formed to work on a cohesive City Vision and establish the best mechanism to proceed.

This could be anything from a City Act, which governs the region, to a renewed push for a Greater Hobart City Council, which seems to make more and more sense with every new development that is announced.

But first and foremost we need a cohesive plan.

Lest we risk talking ourselves around in circles, not achieving very much and looking back in 10 years and wondering how we let such a prime opportunity slip through our fingers.

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