

Who has final say on buildings?

WHEN the development applications for Fragrance Group's skyscrapers are released to the public, the official period for public comment will start. Before that happens, it's important the community can be certain who the final decision-maker will be. The State Government should confirm its proposed Major Projects Legislation will not be used to override Hobart City Council if the council decides to not approve the skyscraper proposals. Planning Minister Mr Gutwein (*Mercury*, August 10) says the new legislation "would not be about fast-tracking these sorts of skyscrapers". The question remains whether the State Government intends to use its legislation to approve high-rise buildings that don't meet the planning rules for Hobart's historic waterfront. The precedent of the Cable Car Facilitation Bill shows the preparedness of the State Government to intervene in development decisions. We need a guarantee from the Planning Minister that the council will not be sidestepped if the skyscraper developers don't get what they want.

Brian Corr
President, Hobart not High-rise Inc.

Design inspiration

WHAT a beautiful masterpiece of design is the MACq 01 hotel on the Hobart waterfront — long low lines, beautiful timber cladding, no tacked-on cheap "jewellery", lovely waterfront setting — Circa Morris-Nunn has created a wonderful thing for Hobart. Fragrance Group, please note that in-your-face glitter is not right for Hobart. This lovely town still has (despite former construction errors) a large number of heritage buildings and an enviable low-

rise character. We can still see our lovely mountain and unique Derwent. We do not want "look at me" edifices to be overshadowing. Planning authorities, please note that the use of "discretion" to bypass planning regulations and foist on to the citizens of Hobart trashy oversized towers will never be forgiven.

Ann Greenwood
Hobart

Tall and thin no better

I COULD not believe my eyes when I saw the statement by Peter Scott, of Xsquared Architects, that "A taller and narrower version ... will have less environmental impact than the shorter version (*Mercury*, August 8)." How does he think the acceptable solutions for height in the Sullivan's Cove Planning Scheme (created to protect the area from buildings such as the Grand Chancellor which is 42m high) can be ignored by saying "less environmental impact". The acceptable solutions height in Collins St is 15m. Xsquared wants to stretch this to 84m (94m to the tip of the spire). The acceptable solutions height in Davey St is 18m and Xsquared wants us to accept a height of 179m (204m to spire tip), although others say it is actually 186m with 211m to spire tip. This skyscraper is going to be extremely visible from many areas of Hobart, not just standing at the bottom looking up. I was also very interested to see a photo montage. It shows so much reflection on the tower that it looks like the invisible man and is also created from an angle that could only be viewed from up in the air. We need to be aware that, as with so many other developers, these people may be asking for the sky (literally) with the intention of making us thankful when

they later reduce the height a bit (but still way above the acceptable solution height). I think a few more people would be joining Simon Currant in front of the bulldozers if that happened. It was very pleasing to see the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania finally come out with a statement opposing the height of these two skyscrapers.

S. Carter
Sandy Bay

Tough for developers

AND so the citizenry rejoice. "High rise is dead. Long live low Hobart". Whilst the Fragrance Group's proposed skyscraper may be on the nose, I sympathise with any developer that needs to run the gauntlet of Hobartian public opinion to get projects approved. Unless you have the Midas-like persuasive qualities of a David Walsh, you're in for a tough time. Perhaps an alternative approach to the planning process may not be to say where skyscrapers can't go, after developers have spent millions of dollars on architect and planning fees, but rather designate areas where, within reason, almost anything can go. An architectural free-for-all zone, out of sight of "old Hobart". Fortunately, Hobart is geographically blessed with physical partitions that could hide the old from the new cities. Mt Rumney to the east could hide a new city along the Acton corridor adjacent to the airport, with Seven Mile Beach new Tasmania's Gold Coast. As well as high-rise hotels, new Hobart could include high-density and lower-cost housing to help address our rental affordability crisis. A win-win for all that deserves to be included in any strategic plan for Hobart.

Hans Willink
Acton Park