

## HOT TOPIC PLANNING OUR CITY

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# Hobart looking cheap and ugly

IT is with a sense of dread that I read the Fragrance group has a contract to purchase the former ABC building, now the University of Tasmania Conservatorium of Music. One only has to look at the nasty use of materials and finishes of the new Fragrance hotel on Macquarie St to get an understanding of what they represent. Cheap and ugly. It is clear that this developer does not care about the integrity of our place or its future.

Hobart is at a tipping point. We already have a number of concrete hotels painted in garish colours. A few more and they will overwhelm any heritage and charm that currently makes Hobart appealing.

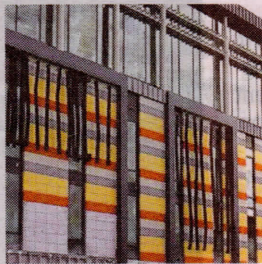
The recent planning reforms have encouraged open slather development without scrutiny for the characteristics that matter to the people who live here. We need guidelines for zones (in the way Battery Point has been served by the Battery Point Planning Scheme) before too much more damage is done and our treasured ABC mural ends up with a chickenfeed makeover.

**Anna Pafitis**  
Taroona

## Don't spoil capital

I AM with Michael Buxton, who as a professor of Environment and Planning at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology surely knows a thing or two about planning, and considerably more than politicians: "... the state's greatest economic strengths are the amenity and heritage of its natural and built environments. Destroy these and the state has no future".

He's absolutely right. Tourists come here in their droves because Tasmania is comparatively unspoilt, its built heritage is



**AESTHETIC:**  
The facade of the new Fragrance Hotel in Macquarie St, Hobart.

Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE

largely intact, and our natural environment is rightly seen as stunning and unique. That gives us a point of difference to other cities, which shouldn't be considered a negative at all, quite the opposite. An intelligent, forward-thinking government ought to recognise this and capitalise on it, not allow it to be devalued or destroyed by lax planning laws that favour developers over the rest of us.

As for our natural environment, Tasmania has earned a swag of tourism awards over the last couple of years because we still have wilderness, and ancient, unique forests. It beggars belief that any responsible government is prepared to let all these advantages in our built and natural heritage disappear.

Peter Gutwein and Will Hodgman should be ashamed of themselves and so should Rebecca White and Labor since they also appear content to support these weakened planning laws.

**Anne Layton-Bennett**  
Swan Bay

## High-rise horror

TASMANIANS need to be careful that we don't end up with the results of bad city planning in Hobart. I would almost certainly propose that the people of Tas-

mania would want the Hobart city skyline not to be interrupted by high-rise buildings. Just because there is a lot of money being waved about in regard to accommodation options for our beautiful city, it does not mean we should make a grab for it.

I remember when I Davey St was being built and the developer asked for an extra level and the council approved it. This was a bad decision for the city as it has made the Hunter St skyline messy. Recently there were some overseas business people wandering around Hobart and they decided to try to buy properties that were not for sale, for example the old treasury building. Now call me old fashioned, but if something is not for sale, it is not for sale.

How dare these developers approach the Government to buy public spaces and buildings. I'm sure there would have been some discussion in the Government ranks to the merit of selling this proposal even though the developers should have been put on the next plane out of town.

If we are not careful, we could end up looking like Singapore. We should be trying to plan our city's future development like they do in Paris with maximum building heights that allow for long views of the skyline.

Additionally, there is the questionably gained money from overseas flooding in and buying up existing hotels, farms and tourism businesses. Not many Asian countries have labour and environmental laws that reflect ours, but the second the deal goes through, the money is legitimised.

Do not get me started about the cable car.

**Brett Carter**  
Cygnets