

17 July 2017

THE VOICE OF TASMANIA

MERCURY

Path right for cable car

THERE are some in our community who think there is a greater likelihood of finding a live and breathing thylacine living on kunanyi/Mt Wellington than there is in ever seeing a cable car built there.

The development has been talked about for decades. It has seen many false starts, has had many different incarnations.

It has received floods of enthusiasm and cynicism in equal measure. It polarises like few other issues.

It remains our city's great white elephant.

But that conversation has shifted in recent times.

There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, tourism industry heavy hitters, including a company half-owned by Tourism Tasmania's chairman James Cretan, have supported the project and have been prepared to put their money where their mouth is.

And the Government has also provided a genuine path forward.

Draft legislation that waives the need for landowner consent for a development application and paves the way for the Government to acquire the required land was released for public comment at the weekend.

If the laws pass, it will allow the proponent, Adrian Bold's Mt Wellington Cable Car Company (MWCC) to access Mt Wellington Park to make assessments and prepare a development application (DA) without the consent of Hobart City Council.

But any DA for the controversial \$54 million proposal would then be assessed through the normal planning process.

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This last point is significant.

It means the community will be able to finally have a genuine say on whether or not this is the type of development it wants.

This will be the ultimate test of whether or not this project will succeed. Can the proponents obtain the so-called "social licence" a project of this scope, size and significance so obviously needs?

The *Mercury* has consistently said it supports the concept of a cable car.

But any project needs to take the community along with it for the ride (pardon the pun) and continue to tick a great many boxes along the way.

We will never resile from continuing to ask hard questions around what could be among the most significant and important tourism developments to ever hit our state.

From here a few key questions will form how this issue evolves:

WILL the community get behind the project?

WILL the laws pass the Upper House?

IF SO, what is the likelihood of the Hobart City Council approving the proposal?

REGARDLESS of whether the council approves or opposes, is the matter destined for the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal?

IS THE project financially viable and sustainable?

DOES the existing team have the expertise, experience and wherewithal to bring it to fruition? These are the most basic of questions that any project of this size would attract. There are many more.

But we welcome this next step. And we welcome an accompanying open and transparent discussion.