

Plenty of chances for people to have a say in our city's future

Mercury

21 July 2017

Jeff Briscoe,
rejects claims that
open-slathe
development is on
the cards for Hobart

ALDERMAN Anna Reynolds' elegant prose, selective quotes and false conclusions (Talking Point, *Mercury*, July 19) do not meet any fact check and may wrongly inform or indeed alarm the public.

The suggested changes do not mean that the city encourages higher skyscrapers in the CBD.

All of us appreciate the unique heritage and beautiful city of Hobart in a fantastic natural environment.

None of us wishes to make negative changes to the planning rules during a period of unprecedented demand for new buildings.

In this regard the council is embarking to set higher standards to protect the streetscape, view lines and heritage. It puts more tools in

the hands of our professional planners to advise all the council members, including Alderman Reynolds, when we make planning decisions.

Firstly, I would like to put to bed one outrageous assertion by Alderman Reynolds, that there is only one last chance for the public to make comments on the proposed amendments. There

are, in fact, at least three or more opportunities and that is only at the council.

The planning commission can also hold further hearings.

Alderman Reynolds is right that the future of building form in the CBD was the subject of a review, but she has characterised it incorrectly.

This review of the Central Business Zone Height Standards Performance Criteria stemmed from the determination of the Palace Hotel where it was evident that the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme 2015 provided insufficient guidance in determining what townscape values were to be considered in relation to proposals that sought discretion to exceed the numerical height standards.

It is important to understand that the current discretionary standards require proposals "not significantly adversely impact on the streetscape and townscape values of the surrounding area" without articulating what those values are.

The proposed amendments attempt to articulate what Hobart's CBD townscape and streetscape values are, and I strongly believe this must be a positive development.

People will have a view on these, and council welcomes comment on them during the public consultation period.

It is important to note that the scope to exercise discretion to exceed the numerical height standards has existed for several decades, and several buildings have

been approved using such discretion, including the now under construction Royal Hobart Hospital H block and associated helipad.

Alderman Reynolds' selective quoting of council's Heritage Officer's report on the Palace Hotel fails to acknowledge that this quote refers to the original proposal considered in March 2015.

This proposal was not approved by the council.

The proposal that was ultimately approved by the council was a significantly modified proposal determined in April 2015 and was supported by council's planning staff subject to conditions.

This highlights the benefit of the approach the majority of the council took, that rather

than adopt the refusal moved by Alderman Reynolds, council took the mature and prudent approach to give the applicant an opportunity to take on board the concerns raised by the council and modify the proposal.

The council can now look forward to a positive and much-needed addition to Hobart's choice of hotels in a location that it was demonstrated to be able to accommodate such a development.

The consultant who undertook the review of the height performance criteria, Leigh Woolley, is the pre-eminent authority of the townscape values of Hobart.

He has written many papers on these qualities and

the city's setting within the wider landscape.

There is no one more highly qualified on this topic to guide the Hobart City Council on this issue.

The two Fragrance hotel proposals are currently applications before the council as the planning authority.

The council is required to consider these applications under the terms of the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 and the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997.

The council is simply not able to publicly comment at this point in time.

Once sufficient information has been lodged to enable assessment of the applications the proposals will be publicly

advertised and people will have an opportunity to lodge submissions.

The proposed amendments to the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme 2015 are designed to provide greater clarity around those townscape and streetscape qualities of Hobart that are not currently well defined, and to provide guidance for all stakeholders on these important issue.

We welcome informed public comment on these changes and there will be six weeks commencing on July 22 and concluding on September 1 to make comment on the proposed changes.

Two public forums to explain the proposed amendments and the results of

the Woolley (2016) Report are scheduled:

TUESDAY, August 8, 5pm at the Elizabeth Street Conference Room.

TUESDAY, August 15, 12.30pm, Elizabeth Street Conference Room.

In addition, the City Planning Committee will allow as much time as is necessary to consider individual or group submissions and deputations in the normal round of the committee.

The council encourages people to take the time to read the background information associated with these amendments (available on the council's website), and to make informed comment within the six-week period available to them. There will

be opportunity after this period for people who have made a written representation to make verbal submission to the council and later to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, which will have the ultimate responsibility of determining what is approved.

Notwithstanding the suggestion from Alderman Reynolds, there is ample opportunity to make your case both in writing and verbally directly to the council, who simply wish to see greater clarity for all stakeholders in the future development of the Hobart central business district.

Alderman Jeff Briscoe is chair of the Hobart City Council's City Planning Committee.