

Still pain in the boom times

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The gentrification of a city is not always good for everyone who lives there, write **ALEXANDRA HUMPHRIES** and **LORETTA LOHBERGER**

HOBART'S inner suburbs are looking pretty sharp these days, but that's not good for everyone.

The gentrification caused by economic growth, and a booming housing market, is pushing people to the margins and beyond.

And ensuring these people are not left behind in getting access to public services such as health and transport is the biggest challenge in coming years, experts say.

University of Tasmania housing expert Kathleen Flanagan said the increase in high-end shops in Hobart's city centre, rising house prices and the tourism boom were all signs of gentrification.

However, she said the benefits were not evenly distributed, and some people were worse off because of it.

"We've seen booming house prices, we're seeing Airbnb kind of becoming a thing in Tasmania, [but] it also has consequences for people at the lower end of the housing market. They might not be seeing the benefits that offset those costs for them," said Dr Flanagan, who is deputy director of the university's Housing and Community Research Unit.

"There's a large amount of research that has been done on what happens to people when areas start to gentrify, and that usually is that people on very low incomes or experiencing disadvantages of various kinds end up being displaced by that, they end up being pushed out to the fringes."

Tasmanian Council of Social Service chief executive

Kym Goodes said there were numerous examples of people on low incomes being pushed out to the margins of Hobart and into regional and rural communities as economic growth in central Hobart and the suburbs continues.

"Affordability, not just of housing, but the range of areas that make up day-to-day living is becoming a major barrier for many," Ms Goodes said.

"This causes issues of displacement for children and families who have often rented in suburbs, for example, such as South and West Hobart, for many years and can no longer afford to.

"This can result in life-changing disruption in schooling, employment, family and friendship interaction and broader community inclusion."

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Ms Goodes said Hobart should be an inclusive city, where everyone who wanted to live in the city could.

"It's not too late but it will take investment and planning to ensure Hobart and our major city centres remain inclusive and sustainable places for all Tasmanians, not just

those on high incomes," she said. "This requires vision, leadership, planning and investment.

"We must also ensure that all Tasmanian communities have the right infrastructure and services to provide a good life for all Tasmanians, regardless of their income level."

Dr Flanagan said there

were holes in Tasmania's social safety net, and "plugging those holes would be a really good start".

She said the areas where solutions were needed included transport and the public health system.

"When you look at the Royal versus one of the private hospitals, that's what in-

equality looks like," Dr Flanagan said.

"There are vastly different levels of services and support available for people depending on their income.

"The question for policy makers is, are they OK with that, or do they want that to be different?"

Dr Flanagan said talk about

the Mona effect and tourism boom was often positive, but it was important to be aware that not everybody experienced the boom in the same way.

"If we're going to say this is our future, we need to make sure that we are not leaving people behind, that we're making sure we're bringing everyone with us," she said.

Ease of living a top drawcard

HOBART'S walk-ability and friendliness are what sets it apart in the lifestyle stakes, says Lord Mayor Sue Hickey.

"Our size allows us to remain connected on so many levels," she said, noting the area's natural attributes as well its vibrant urban heart.

The University of Tasmania knows this too, even trying to lure prospective students based on the lifestyle — and the proximity of the university



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to "numerous drawcards" such as waterways, beaches and wilderness areas that are available for myriad outdoor activities.

"This place is pristine and, quite simply, beautiful," the university website says.

Clarence Mayor Doug Chipman, right, believes our

fresh air and blue skies are a key factor, as well as relatively low-cost housing compared with prices in Melbourne and Sydney.

"We've got those really attractive features, like open space, lack of crowding relatively compared to the big cities, blue sky, fresh air, and opportunities that come with that, so more and more people are being attracted to it," he said.

"One of the reasons for that

is you can sell a house in Melbourne or Sydney for over a million dollars and buy a really lovely property in Tasmania and you don't have to put up with traffic or pollution."

Alderman Hickey said it was important to protect Hobart's historic charm, while embracing a "city for the future" with "opportunity for all".

Alderman Chipman said if we had protected our lifestyle completely 100 years ago, Tas-

manians would still be driving around in horse and carts on unsealed roads.

"I don't think we ought to be closing our mind," he said.

"The lifestyle as we know it is fundamentally changing. We have to be vigilant to ensure quality of life improves with it."

