

MERCURY

Don't settle for mediocre

HOBART is a remarkable city. Tasmania is a remarkable state.

We call it home, so it can be easy to forget this very fact. But it is true.

Visitors to the state are more often than not blown away by what is on offer. Unmatched beauty, a safe environment, an inclusive, welcoming community, a deep-seated desire to protect our natural resources and a city which has done what many other capital cities have not, largely protect its heritage while also embracing new developments.

What we have, where we live, is not world class, it is world leading.

The likes of author Richard Flanagan and actor Essie Davis are international names who have travelled the world, but remain deeply protective of what we have here.

It is no surprise. It is the reason people are coming here in record numbers. The secret is out.

People, politicians, even newspaper editors come and go, but this fact remains: Hobart is special. Tasmania is special. But we are also at a critical juncture to decide the type of capital city and state we want and need to be. As more people become aware of what we have, more challenges will present themselves. There will be growing pains. And that is why we need a cohesive vision of the type of city we want to become. It's a challenge we today lay down for the major parties in the lead-up to the next state election.

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How do we go beyond piecemeal announcements to bring together all the pieces of the puzzle into a cohesive strategy? Such a vision would need to answer a few key questions:

1. What role will the university play in the future of our city. Infrastructure Australia says a \$400 million STEM centre would transform the CBD and dramatically boost the economy, while lifting education outcomes across the state. It seems a no brainer. But who is prepared to show genuine leadership in this space?

2. If that occurs, what does that mean for the future of UTAS in the CBD? Is there more scope for educational developments at Macquarie Point, complementing a reconciliation park and an Antarctic precinct, as the uni continues its shift from Sandy Bay?

3. From there, how do we link Macquarie Point and Mona, particularly in light of the Mona 2.0 developments? There is a vacant, waterfront rail corridor; something which would be the envy of other states. There is the scope for urban renewal along this corridor; something that will be needed to accommodate the scores of people set to come into the area.

4. And from there, what does that mean for a metropolitan transport strategy? Our congestion is worsening and there is "talk" of ferry services. But at the moment it is just that: talk.

5. What does that all mean for the future of developments. Do we want high-rise buildings in town. Do we want them along a rail corridor? Do we want them at all?

The list goes on. Hobart is a remarkable city. Tasmania is a remarkable state. We are not run of the mill. We are not mediocre. And we need a vision and leadership which reflects this.

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