

ISSUE 1825

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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UN-B-LEAVE-ABLE

A business group has put forward a proposal to build a cable car to the top of Mt Wellington, and it has done a lot of background work to prove up this project.

Land ownership of the mountain is complex, but much of the eastern slopes fall within the orbit of the Hobart City Council. The Wellington Park Management Trust is the responsible body which co-ordinates the management of the mountain via the Wellington Park Management Plan. This 264-page document cites the multi-use nature of the park, including the protection of environmental values and the opportunity for tourism and recreation.

Because the land currently in question is Council land, the proponents sought permission from the Council to enter onto the land at the pinnacle to carry out a range of surveys. That access was denied.

The survey was a prerequisite for drawing up a Development Application (DA) to present to Council. In denying access, Council advised that they would not give permission to access the land to do any survey until such time as they received a DA. A classic Catch 22 - farcical.

The impasse was resolved by the government temporarily acquiring the land, thus enabling the survey work to be done.

The proponents then considered a range of options for the cable car route. Nearby residents were stirred up to protest in anticipation of a DA, including from some aldermen, claiming a loss of amenity, amongst other things.

The proponents finally decided on a route which would have minimal if any impact on residents. It did require a new access-way to a site for the base station, and for that to occur, the proponents sought permission from the Council to conduct a flora and fauna survey along the accessway.

Council officers supported the application, but they were overridden by the Council's Parks Committee, with a number of aldermen speaking out against having a cable car at all. Their tune has changed from wanting to know in detail what the proponents had in mind (ie a DA) to not wanting any information at all. In other words a closed mind.

Of course, and as an aside, the absurdity of it all is that a flora and fauna survey could be done anyway as there is no limit to access. However...

Now the full Council has accepted the recommendation of the Parks Committee to reject the request. The full Council has reportedly stated that a road access will adversely affect the “potential” habitat of a “critically endangered” orchid. And that is a load of codswallop!

Council keeps advising the public of the need to follow planning guidelines. But obviously, when it suits them, a naïve and absurd ideological stance has led to the planning guidelines being torn up and thrown away.

Which says a lot about the present Council. Pathetic!

The Cable Car

Saying “NO”

Hobart City CI

Grants

Macquarie Point

Late Breaking News

It's so easy to say NO

There appears to be a syndrome running through the community that closes the mind to any change. "Change is bad. Leave everything as it is". "In fact, let's go retro, back to a simpler way of life".

Whereas for example the woodchip port in Dover would have given that community another level of economic activity, and in fact protect it against any downturn in the salmon industry, the immediate response was NO!

The salmon farms at Okehampton Bay or the temporary harvest facility in Norfolk Bay? NO! The Cambria Green development on the East Coast? NO! The Cable Car? NO!

We don't want details – the response is NO!

The Naysayers capture the high moral ground – emotive arguments are mounted to "save the planet etc" against the seeming ravages of development. What I do find interesting is that these naysayers, good as they are at lobbying, have no skin in the game. It's not their jobs on the line, yet they capture media attention. Controversy sells.

The fact of the matter is that change will occur – it is inevitable. If we close the door to investment interest, then we are placing ourselves in a most vulnerable position. If we end up being a high-risk environment, then no-one will want to invest here. The so-called hi-tech smart jobs are not isolated from the rest of the economy. You can't have one without the other. We turn our backs at our peril.

HCC Part 2

Council has sought input into its draft "City of Hobart Transport Strategy". This 92-page document is filled with platitudes regarding our "strong spirit of place" and of our "embrace of the City's wonder".

It acknowledges that beyond Hobart's boundaries, "we are a very car-dependent population". Which is rather self-evident as the greater Hobart area is strung out along both sides of the river, and into the hinterland beyond.

As a starting point, it states that we "need to be" less car-dependent. Less cars, more public transport. Really?

The report pays lip service to improved roads and traffic flow, and improved parking arrangements. And, as a revelation, its draft findings are that we need less cars, and more public transport. "*Quel surprise!*"

Well, quite frankly that's not going to happen. The population will grow. Irrespective of the desire of planners, cars will be the predominant form of transport because they are the most flexible form of transport. If Council wants people to come into the city, then they need to cater to that demand. Telling someone in say Sorell or Margate to catch a bus won't stop them using their car. Making it hard to get to the city simply means they will access services elsewhere.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the desperate need for carparking in the North Hobart shopping precinct. Council's response – to sit on their collective hands - again. Which again says a lot about the present Council. Pathetic!

It is beyond time for the government to introduce a regional approach to matters of planning and traffic. It is simply beyond the scope of Councils as presently constituted to see the bigger picture, including Hobart. The present mob at Hobart are inviting a government takeover – in my book the sooner the better.

Roads and Bridges

While on the topic of a regional approach to roads, I cannot fathom why

- a. the improvements to the Elwick Road intersection with the Brooker Highway was not a flyover. Yes it would be a more expensive option, but it would have solved existing traffic problems that still occur there, and it has done nothing to resolve increased traffic flow; and
- b. the Summerleas overpass at Kingston (designed as an overpass with far less traffic than that at Elwick) was only designed as a 3-lane option.

In both instances, decisions taken to manage and improve increased traffic flow have in fact been designed to ensure that future traffic flow remains a problem.

Government Grants

Governments grant money to a range of organisations for a variety of purposes. In most instances the money is approved on receipt of an application for funds and after an appraisal has been made, but sometimes money is granted to a worthy cause or purpose without formal application being made.

Such behavior is blown away however by the audacious gift of \$444m made by the Federal Government to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, a Foundation without resources, without any specific project being considered, without any application being made by them, or the Foundation even being aware that such a grant was being considered.

In fact the money was paid upfront for a 6-year program, the details of which remain unclear. In fact, why \$444m? Why pay it all in one lump sum? And what was the driver for determining this "odd" amount?

To conduct any work the money will need to be granted to a range of organisations, most of which will be public or semi-public entities, such as Universities, the CSIRO, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. So why not grant them the money in the first place?

The Minister, while emphasizing that his Department wrote the Cabinet submission, obfuscates when asked whose idea it was to make the grant in the first place. It remains unclear who came up with this idea and why this specific amount was chosen.

It would appear that the grant was made because someone in the government believed the Foundation could leverage the grant by gaining further grants from the private sector. But that remains unproven. It would appear to be very much a banker's deal. But its certainly not smart politics, and the government is suffering because of it.

It is the same questionable practice as that of a former Labor Government Minister (Burke) granting \$2.4m to Environment Tasmania (ET) in 2014, which had not applied for funds, to conduct forest rehabilitation works during the Tasmanian Forest Agreement process. Not to mention the open gift of \$100m to the State Government at that time. In the event, ET engaged Forestry Tasmania to do that work.

Although the amount is much less than the present situation, I believe the action is more questionable, in that it was designed to put forest workers out of work, and in the event, Burke took advantage of the policy to purchase land for himself abutting an area reserved through the TFA process. Not a good look at all!

Macquarie Point

Breaking news.

A new development – the Tin Shed is to house some old seats from the Theatre Royal. Reported on Facebook Aug 15 "Were so excited to have a piece of Tasmania's thespian history here at Mac Point".

So, Mac Point is to become a warehouse for old furniture!

Now that IS news.

And in very late breaking news a decision has now been made to build a Long.House (yes, with a dot in the middle) to be constructed in a demountable fashion to house a range of community groups and activities. Costing \$700,000, it will be reportedly built from containers,

An application has been lodged with the Hobart City Council, so best of luck with that one. What could possibly go wrong there?!

The CEO says that the development will result in "creative collaboration". The Minister has said that this is a sign of things to come. Oh!

Ah yes - the "Vision thing". I think most will be left bemused, if not speechless by these decisions.

Of Fire and Flood

Bushfires in the middle of winter in drought-ravaged lands in NSW – heavy rains in Tasmania leading to flood warnings in a number of river systems. These issues won't go away and are very much a part of the Australian scene, as they always have been.

We must be forever vigilant to these destructive forces within our landscape, and take the appropriate action at the appropriate time to minimize their effects, including river levees for floods and fuel reduction burns for fire.

Late breaking news

Prime Minister Turnbull has just won a leadership ballot against Peter Dutton, 48 votes to 35. after declaring the leadership position vacant,

There were only 7 votes in it. Although the PM won the ballot, In my view he has been mortally wounded in the process.

The vote was held in the Liberal Party room, and did not involve National Party members, most of whom have expressed their opposition to the Prime Minister's approach to energy policy, and who will continue to agitate for change to that policy.

Dutton is now embarked on a full-frontal attack, and this ballot will only give him the confidence to mount his own challenge. The difficulty for him is that at this time he is seen by the public in a very uni-directional - and cruel – way, due to his management of the present Immigration and Asylum Seeker policy.

And for the instability this will inevitably cause.

If and when he is successful, I suspect he will be a very divisive figure, rather than a unifying one. And that does not bode well for the country.