

ISSUE 1907

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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Limits

The Lord Mayor of Hobart has made a startling admission. “I signed the Hobart City Deal document, not because I agree with it, but because it was “good form” to do so”.

Good form? Now, there's “principle” on show. The Deal is obviously a dud, she knew it was a dud, but better to give in because it is “good form” to do so.

She has also taken aim at the Property Council, complaining that they were taking too close an interest in the building height debate. How high should buildings be in the CBD? The Council had engaged a respected architect to advise it of sensible height restrictions, but Council equivocates. Of course the Property Council is interested in such equivocation. Lord Mayor, why shouldn't they be? They are a lobby group, and this matter is of great interest to its members. Serious investment decisions ride on this debate, as you should be aware.

While having a crack at the Property Council for being too interested in Council affairs, no such criticism has been leveled by the Lord Mayor at the anti-cable car group for taking a similar interest in Council affairs. Council had previously advised that the cable car company cannot access Council land so that it can complete a Development Application to place before Council. So the Government, rightly, over-rode that.

And this flows on to another recommendation to Council from its Parks and Recreation Committee to spend \$100,000 to examine the merits of placing Mt Wellington on the National Heritage List, which incidentally passes control to the Commonwealth.

The Committee Chairman stated that this was not an attempt to stop the cable car development from proceeding. Bollocks! Of course it is! That is the ONLY reason it is being suggested. Interestingly the cable car proponent has welcomed the suggestion, stating that it would support such a move, as it would give greater recognition to the mountain – and of course its operation - if it proceeded. I guess that's the last we will hear of that one.

Mind you, the usual active anti-everything campaigners - yes, them - have been mobilizing the troops, ready to protest against any office that has had anything remotely to do with the cable car company, including the technical advice. This is not “peaceful protest”, This is an overt act of intimidation, designed to frighten people and threaten business, and such actions should be roundly condemned.

Which the Premier did, calling them the “Anti-Everything Brigade”, and all power to him for doing so. An opinion writer wrote on the weekend that the Premier had taken an intolerant, antidemocratic and “partisan” position by calling the protestors out, and condemned him roundly for doing so. “He should show more respect”. (How dare a politician take a partisan position!) He then by association linked the Premier with authoritarian figures such as Trump and the Chinese Communist Party. What a ludicrous series of allegations. Tolerance indeed!

While considering spending such funds on an esoteric gesture, real issues remain unresolved. Council it would appear, has come up with a solution to resolve the carparking nightmare which is in North Hobart, only to find it is a "change of use" under the planning scheme, and such must now be presented to the Planning Commission for approval. All of which takes more time and more money. One would have hoped that the new planning regime would have resolved such matters, but no. This is a classic "red tape" issue, and it is incumbent upon Council to find a way through this morass without delay.

Also hitting the airwaves was the call by some on the Hobart Council to no longer fund the Taste of Tasmania. No sooner do we have a success than we condemn it. It has obviously become too much of a burden on the Council. So, lets remove it from Council.

Government should take it over, and set up a vehicle to run it from here on in, as it has with football. It could roll it into Ten Days on The Island, or rather roll Ten Days into the Taste, as quite frankly Ten Days has outlived its usefulness.

Ten Days was conceived at a time when the arts was in need of promotion, but what with the Festival of Small Halls, the Festival of Voices, the Tasmanian Chamber Music Festival and other such events going gang-busters, that is not the case now. If Mona can put on two large festivals each year (summer and winter), why does it take the Ten Days Board 2 years to put on one show? It had its place and its time, but that place and that time is over.

Meanwhile, real problems go

Industry and a Social Licence

The salmon industry is coming under fire because of its plans for expansion, with many critics complaining that the waterways are being "littered" with flotsam from fish farms, thus creating a hazard for boats and the boating fraternity.

Floating debris from fish farms is a hazard, and the government has introduced a "no tolerance of waste" policy, with penalties for so doing. It is good policy, and the industry has supported it.

The criticism goes that the penalties are not being enforced and that critics are being silenced by salmon farm "largesse" for various community activities. First of all, the regulations should be enforced, No question.

But the broader issue is how does an industry gain a social licence. To do so it must be a responsible "member" of society. It must obey the law. It must operate with concern for the environment in which it is operating, and it should keep the community informed of its activities. It must be engaged with the community in which it operates. But herein lies a paradox. if it engages with the local community and provides funding for certain facilities and events it is subject to the criticism that it is buying support. And yet, if it doesn't, then it is subject to the criticism that it has no concern for the community it operates in. A lose lose. A conundrum to be sure.

A forest bypass road

It seems everyone has given up on having a southern port for the export of wood products outside of Hobart. Which is a crying shame. A southern port makes such sense. However, for now it is not to be. Triabunna was the original option but that is now no longer on the table. Nor, incidentally are the plans to develop the Triabunna site into a tourist mecca. What a con that was.

The Hobart port remains an option, but a limited one, and one that will be the subject of a continuing debate, especially now that Macquarie Point is "back on the radar", what with an honourable mention in the Hobart City Deal. Say no more!

The only other option is to move product north, and the most efficient way would appear to be by rail. Which means getting product to a railhead. I was pleased to see the Mercury newspaper taking up the cudgels on the weekend, expressing some sympathy for the upgrade of the Plenty Slip Road between the Huon and Derwent Valleys to assist such an event occurring.

It has been talked about forever, but it has always ended up in the too hard basket. The latest iteration has the Minister for Forests saying "It would be a bold move". What a depressing comment. Can't have boldness now, can we. That's not what politics is about – being bold. Not only bold, Minister, Necessary!

Instead, the Minister says the government would "continue to work with the industry to ensure freight is moved as efficiently and cost effectively as possible". What "work"? In other words, nothing. Yawn.

Tas Water

TasWater is to spend over \$350,000 on a PR campaign to tell the community what it does. It carried out a survey and was surprised to find that people did not know what it did. Seriously, how absurd. Everyone that gets a bill from Tas Water must have some idea of what it does.

What it should be doing with that money is to employ its own Program Management Officer to manage its own works program. Because at the moment it doesn't have one, and it cannot do what it needs to do. In fact it has outsourced this task to a mainland firm when it should have taken responsibility for its own program.

There is a sense of "Utopia" about this decision. Instead of addressing its real problem, it is ignoring it altogether. Now that is simply not good management.

By the way, who is in control of TasWater these days? Mmmm. Maybe we need to also address that issue.

Knowing one's place

The Prime Minister has been criticised for what would appear to be a patronising approach when saying "We want to see women rise. But we don't want to see women rise ...on the basis of others doing worse". Mmmmm.

I can understand that women would be upset by such a comment, a comment that one of his own Ministers referred to as "klunky".

And I can also understand that in a zero sum game, such a phrase becomes meaningless.

But I think the real prize goes to the use of the word "others". Others? Who might others be? Men? Who else? Seems I am now an "Other".

A final word

Congratulations once again to the organisers of the Taste of the Huon for another most successful show. All credit to you.