

Friday 23rd June, 2023

BUILDING A LEGACY: EMBRACING DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PROSPERITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS OF TASMANIANS

I have followed with a great deal of interest the range of articles that have focused on the proposed stadium development following Simon Bevilacqua's piece (30th May, 2023), which I read with a sense of relief and admiration, in The Mercury on the topic.

Simon's reference to the magnitude of the health challenge, and related budget commitment was telling as is his respect for the vision and opportunity that underpins the stadium project.

Spending my time between Alice Springs, western Victoria and regional South Australia since I left Tasmania at the end of January, I can categorically say that the challenges that Tasmania faces in the social environment, and particularly in health, are no greater than elsewhere in our nation.

Health is incredibly complex, but I do think that it takes Government, health providers and individuals working together to meet the challenge initially through a focus on preventative health and wellbeing.

In respect to the argument about funding for the stadium versus channelling more into health, rather than people being angry and demanding an either/or approach we must work together to seize those opportunities, such as the Mac Point precinct development to deliver substantial economic benefits, and simultaneously generate significant social, health and community wellbeing benefits.

Let's work towards a State where elite sport and pathways from grassroots to their own centre stage, as reflected in world class sporting and entertainment facilities, encourages more participation, community togetherness and a culture of physical activity and inclusion.

What I find most frustrating is that those that tend to dominate the conversation refuse to consider a counter view and more concerningly the facts. The stadium has become the target for vitriol that is being hysterically peddled, ignoring the reality that while it is a critical centrepiece of the Mac Point precinct it is not the whole, and it is certainly not all about AFL.

Most of these critics put their hand on their hearts and pledge their support for an AFL team but ignore the reality of what is required for a team to exist and ultimately succeed in an elite competition. To simply say that Blundstone Arena, or for that matter York Park are suitable, as the AFL plays there now is simplistic and frankly naïve. From a facility, amenity and a local community public infrastructure perspective neither stacks up.

I am not sure how many experts need to reiterate this for it to be clearly understood.

That is why the team and the stadium is inextricably linked. It is not negotiable and I suggest that if we forgo this opportunity now we will not be able to have another run at our team for another generation or two. The AFL will not entertain a conversation for decades to come.

The reality is that where other AFL franchises have been established there were already suitable arenas in place that required a level of upgrading to bring them to the standard expected not only by the athletes competing in them but also the spectators. The upgrades to both the Gold Coast (approx. \$144 million) and Western Sydney stadiums were at a significant cost. Worth noting that in the case of Carrara (Gold Coast) the Council contributed \$23 million!

Moreover, as destination stadiums become economic enablers in every other capital city, and places like Townsville and Geelong, why would Tasmania want to do the opposite of best practice? If that's the result, then we will end up being left behind and actively inhibit opportunities.

I have had the opportunity to experience firsthand the positive difference that Optus Stadium and Adelaide Oval have made to Perth and Adelaide respectively, not just as world class venues that support and attract elite sports teams, but generate enormous community pride, and significant economic benefit.

The economic benefit that the Hobart precinct will generate, is critical for the State to continue investing the significant funds it does now in Health and Education.

If Government does not invest in infrastructure that will generate more revenue and income, can someone explain to me what these ever escalating costs to support essential services will be funded from?

You can't keep spending what you haven't got or earn, and that applies equally to Governments.

The counter proposal to develop Mac Point with an emphasis on constructing affordable accommodation is with all due respect a clear indication of the commercial naivety and desire to be identified as social champions by those fronting that position. Predictable, but frankly ultimately irresponsible.

There is so much energy being generated and expended on this opportunity - how good would it be if it was harnessed in a positive way and committed to a respectful, mature and balanced dialogue rather than the hateful and bigoted attitude that is all too evident and dominant now.

The stadium is projected to contribute \$85 million per annum to the economy, with the AFL and AFLW teams generating a further \$120 million annually.

Which brings me to the kunanyi/Mount Wellington cableway project. The cable car operation is projected to contribute up to \$99 million per annum, at no initial capital cost to the State.

Here is a project that is economically and environmentally responsible and sustainable that will drive visitation and elevate Tasmania further as a must see destination not only through the experience but through the environmental values it reflects. It will provide alternative, socially inclusive and cost competitive transport options for everyone of all ages and abilities, as well as the supplies and material needed to deliver a quality experience on the summit. Its design and

routing reflect the significant community input actively sought by the, as well as world best practice.

Approximately 90% of the shareholders are Tasmanians and expats and despite the cynicism about the make up of this group, I can absolutely state that their commitment is driven primarily by their desire to provide a future asset for their kids, grandchildren and every other young Tasmanian.

There has been recent commentary on the project with Luke Martin providing his thoughts as he prepares to depart the TICT.

Luke reiterated his view that no one wants to see inappropriate development in protected areas and that any development on public lands, creating tourism, should be extremely high quality and highly regulated.

That view is shared by the proponents and shareholders of the Mount Wellington Cableway Company (MWCC) and reflected in its architectural design and values.

In response to his view that the cableway concept has monopolised and stifled the conversation, that may well be due to the lack of initiative by other parties or the seemingly inherent reaction to tear down whatever project is brought forward.

MWCC makes no apologies on behalf of its shareholders for taking the initiative and undertaking an enormous amount of work necessary to advance this project thereby bringing it to the forefront of discussions about the mountain.

The cableway concept was developed in consideration of the Wellington Park Management Plan and received strong bipartisan support in both Houses of Parliament with ratification of the kunanyi/Mt Wellington Cable Car Facilitation Act 2017. This new law also attracted strong public support with the second largest parliamentary petition in the State's history behind euthanasia.

After four iterations of Request for Further Information, Hobart City Council accepted and advertised the Development Application for comment, attracting over 4000 submissions in favour of the project which remains an unheard of result for a Land Use Planning Approvals Act (LUPAA) process.

Luke's assertion that *"where the cable car has gone wrong is that we've lost sight of what the problem is"* I counter with the view that some may have lost sight of the opportunity, and that the initiative shown by MWCC in identifying not only the problem but the opportunity that goes with that, should be not only be supported but applauded. Particularly the respect it has clearly demonstrated for community views, environmental considerations and the regulatory environment as it has advanced the project.

Like the interrelated connection between the stadium and a Tasmanian AFL team, appropriate facilities at the summit worthy of the calibre Luke seeks needs to be resolved in conjunction with reliable access. These two issues underline the potential opportunity which the cable car project offers together, in a way that not only grows the economy but can switch the Mountain's current funding model around for the benefit of local Tasmanians. No longer should taxpayers and ratepayers cover the cost for tourists to enjoy the Mountain, instead, willing tourists seeking out the views and experience on offer could cover the Park running costs so that all local Tasmanians can enjoy the Mountain for free.

We agree with the position that the Wellington Park Management Trust should be independently reviewed as it is clearly under resourced and lacks the authority to determine and implement the best outcomes for the park relative to the current, and certainly the future, demand on the park infrastructure, access capability and amenity and functionality of general public areas.

This review should be conducted in parallel with, and not inhibit the progress of the MWCC project, or any other for that matter, that meets the requirements of the management plan.

The commercial reality is that this \$64 million capital project funded by the private sector and generates 200 jobs during the construction phase and 60 full time jobs once operational, it cannot be put on the backburner again while another protracted review takes place.

Shareholders have expended in excess of \$4 million to date to identify key issues, determine the most appropriate and feasible design, and work through the TASCAT process. It is fair to say that a pathway forward must be identified soon, or this investment and opportunity will be lost to the State, its visitor economy and to all future generations of Tasmanians.

I urge people to visit our website – www.mtwellingtoncablecar.com to gain an understanding of the incredible amount of work that has been undertaken by the MWCC team over the last 11 years all undertaken with the utmost respect and regard to community consultation and the regulatory environment.

The cableway project will not travel over any residential areas, it will reduce traffic, carbon emissions, and deliver high quality levels of safety and amenity on the summit.

It certainly will not monopolise access to the summit, which is a medium term probability with the alternate concept being developed by Hobart City Council.

For local Tasmanians it will offer transport at a lesser cost than the current bus service which has been subsidised by Council, which if it is to cater to expected demand will only increase road traffic. The bus service operation's reliability is, and will remain, subject to road and snow conditions.

The cableway will provide rapid access and evacuation capability for emergency services and a redundancy option in the event of road closure due to weather or accidents, and scheduled events such as the Point to Pinnacle.

In addition, it offers smarter and efficient wastewater and visitor management at the summit while supporting the management workload on the Wellington Park Management Trust.

And of course, importantly it will generate and sustain jobs while building a skill set in a sustainable technology that we currently do not have.

I am confident that there is a significant support base for both the cableway and the Macquarie Point Entertainment and Sports Precinct – that base has been largely quiet, and now is the time for them to step up and support the vision that the State must embrace.

I'd really like to hear from the Tasmanians that really matter and should be our priority – our younger demographic, including our children, who seem to not have the opportunity to contribute to the conversation.

They represent the State's future more so than the older demographic cohort that is comfortable with their own lifestyle and situation that dominate the conversation currently. Respectfully, to that cohort - this is not about you. The question needs to be asked – what do our young people see as important to tomorrow's Tasmania and their own aspirations, and what must we invest in and focus on, to tie their future to this State?

These projects are for young Tasmanians who dream and aspire to have a future they can be proud of that in other places is taken for granted.

A cableway that demonstrates our renewable, sustainable credentials while bringing a new focus and amenity to the whole State, funded by Tasmanians that back their vision and desire to create something for future generations with their own money.

An Entertainment and Sports Precinct where all Tasmanians have the opportunity to compete in elite sports, attend world class entertainment events, participate in the performing arts and work in world leading technology fields. All with a sense of pride and a knowledge that the opportunity was there for them to take due to the investment we must make now.

There was strident opposition prior to the Skyrail cableway in North Queensland and both the Adelaide and Perth stadium developments, but now those cities' populations are incredibly proud of what those projects have delivered to their communities and their economies.

We believe that Tasmania is at a crucial juncture. Do we invest in our State's future and our young people, or for reasons maybe known only to those who oppose, do we allow the State and our kids to be held back for generations to come?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mayell', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Tony Mayell

Executive Chair, Mount Wellington Cableway Company Pty. Limited.