

City of Hobart  
GPO Box 503  
Hobart TAS 7001

Date: 21.12.2021

By email to: [communityengagement@hobartcity.com.au](mailto:communityengagement@hobartcity.com.au)

To whom it may concern,

**RE: CENTRAL HOBART PRECINCTS PLAN DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the City of Hobart's Central Hobart Precincts Plan. The Institute is supportive of the development of the precincts plan and broadly supports the direction that is outlined in the discussion paper. We applaud the City of Hobart for taking steps to ensure that the future of the city is considered and well planned and focuses on the value of good design and the benefits it affords the community in the long-term.

The Institute is the peak body for the Architectural profession in Australia, representing almost 13,000 members, including approximately 330 members in the Tasmanian Chapter. The Institute works to improve our built environment by promoting quality, responsible and sustainable design.

Architecture influences all aspects of the built environment and brings together environmental awareness, sciences and technology and the arts. The design of the built environment shapes the places where we live, work and meet. The quality of the design affects how spaces and places function and is able to stimulate the economy and enhance the environment. Good design adds value for all and can play a transformative role in the lives of every person.

There are key challenges that we are facing, and we commend the City of Hobart for proactively planning for the future of our city. Primary issues facing our community include climate change, housing affordability, equitable access to community services, an ageing demographic, increasing demand for efficient transport systems, and the need for high quality community and public infrastructure to support a growing population. These require sophisticated solutions. The planning and design of our city and the way it addresses these challenges is of vital importance and will significantly impact the shape and quality of our built environment.

We must strive to deliver places for communities that are built and connected in a way that enhances liveability, wellbeing, sustainability and productivity. This requires the

integration of planning, transport, design and implementation. Tasmania is faced with a major housing problem in terms of availability, affordability and accessibility. There is a major shortfall of social housing available for those on low incomes who need housing, especially those who have recently experienced homelessness, family violence or have other special needs.

Along with access to housing, social and economic inclusion is required for all through good access to retail and commercial centres, community and health care facilities, education and training opportunities. Housing needs to be connected through public transport and active transport infrastructure such as walking paths and cycling lanes to connect people to jobs, education, retail centres and community hubs.

Hobart's built heritage assets have played a major role in attracting visitors from interstate and overseas and contributed significantly to the city's tourism resurgence. The challenge is to provide sensitive, well-considered projects that integrate and enhance the unique characteristics of our natural and heritage context, while enabling them to be used in a manner that is consistent with modern-day living and requirements. Hobart has a unique built heritage that requires careful management, protection and adaptation. This built heritage consists of buildings of all types and from all eras that contribute to the character of our city, and as well as protecting buildings from the 19th century, attention must be paid to our more recent heritage - buildings from the 20th century.

Growth of our cities needs to include appropriate densification alongside existing buildings to prevent the blight of costly and irreversible urban sprawl that has beset other Australian capital cities. Hobart must enhance the resilience of our built environment to extreme weather events and predicted climate change impacts. Design plays a critical role in integrating systems, such as water and waste management, natural ecologies, culture, human health and wellbeing, and a well-designed built environment is instrumental in achieving this.

The Institute, given its representation of members, is particularly pleased to note that the discussion paper provides a focus on the built form of the city and design excellence, and the valuable contribution these make to the future character of the city. We welcome the revisiting of the Ghel report. We are also supportive of the Woolley report, but advocate for a rigorous design process that respects and responds to the specific characteristics of each site and surrounding areas.

We are heartened to see that the plan includes reference to sustainable design. The Institute acknowledges the crises of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss and recognises the need to create a sustainable built environment that fosters connectivity and integrates essential resources and functions to mitigate against adverse impacts from climate change when planning and designing our city.

With the current housing crisis in the state, we would support a plan that addresses the need for affordable and social housing and encourages the development of this. The Institute has an Affordable Housing Policy, that can be found [here](#), along with a Multi-Residential Standards Policy, that can be found [here](#).

The precincts plan will contain a number of controlling aspects (for example, height limits) that will shape what will be created in the city, however, there should be avenues built in for opportunities that do not comply with the rules, other than having to go to appeal during the planning process, which is costly for all involved. Some nuance should be allowed for.

For example, the creation of open usable public space is to be lauded at ground level, but certain sites would preclude this due to the scale or shape of the site, unless permission were to be given to go a little higher. A developer should be able to negotiate for a “rule” breaking component by offering another community beneficial aspect that somehow “pays” for the development. There are examples of this elsewhere. One such example occurred in Melbourne where the Princess Theatre was restored at the cost of a developer, and in return the developer was able to build additional floors on their building. This ability for nuance and negotiation may not necessarily be in relation to height, however we have used this example to illustrate the point.

We suggest that the precinct planning allow for some form of methodology for this kind of negotiation to allow for projects that don’t specifically comply with the framework, to allow for benefits for both the city and its people, and the site. Clever, well thought-out, and designed opportunities that give back to the city and the public, have the potential to create a positive impact. These types of negotiations require a high-level of design intelligence to assess and would benefit from the assistance of expert panels or the like at a state government level.

When considering building heights, we suggest that height limits could be expressed in storey limits, rather than in metres. We want to enable good design. Height limits expressed in meters could result in developers trying to squeeze in as many floors as possible to generate more saleable area, which would result in low-quality spaces (with low ceilings). If a storey limit was the datum instead, then developers could be allowed to create spaces that had generous floor to ceiling heights which in turn create better spaces to be in and remain within the rules. An absolute maximum height limit in metres could define the upper limit.

The Institute recognises the importance of this project for the future of our city and would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the above further. We look forward to reviewing the draft precincts plan in early 2022.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Nichols', written in a cursive style.

**Jennifer Nichols**

Executive Director, Tasmanian Chapter  
Australian Institute of Architects