

Uni projects deserve

SIMON BEVILACQUA



UTAS leadership has failed to explain its case for moving its Sandy Bay campus into inner-city Hobart.

Efforts to do so in the Mercury's Talking Point opinion section — and in the newspaper's letters pages, news pages and in paid advertising content — raise more questions than they answer.

It is unsurprising the Tasmanian public has joined this critically important public discourse with genuine issues about the effect on students, businesses, the university, the city centre and Sandy Bay.

The public's concerns have been amplified by comments and queries from former UTAS students and a long list of highly regarded former lecturers and academics, who expressed serious reservations.

Sadly, these questioning voices have been pilloried by some who support the city move, but who refuse to address the many detailed concerns, preferring to make snide personal attacks.

In recent days, countless letter-writers have justifiably expressed anger at the uni's glib, condescending manner, and refusal to address issues.

Professor Henry Reynolds, a hero of mine for his landmark work over four decades reinterpreting the conflict between colonists and Aborigines, had me choking on my coffee when I read his most recent opinion piece (Talking Point, March 3).

Known for considered judgment, Prof Reynolds dismissed those with concerns as a "ragged coalition" driven by "personal and professional grievances". In a haymaker swipe, Prof Reynolds hit at the credibility of countless correspondents and, while he may have inside knowledge of personal spats in academia that the public does not, the complainants he dismissed so disdainfully come from a cross-section of the community and can't all be spatting with the university. For heaven's sake.

I have no personal or professional grievance with the university. I completed a graduate diploma of librarianship there many years ago and my memories of the learning experience, lecturers and tutors are all positive. I am indebted to the uni for providing me with a valuable educational grounding.

I firmly believe most with concerns are speaking up for legitimate reasons. Of course, personal attack as a public relations strategy is as old as the hills — whistleblowers always have their credibility undermined by being cast as "disgruntled ex-employees" and end up sidetracked by having to fight to protect their reputation. However, as common and effective as such tactics are, to read Prof Reynolds, a man of reason whom I admire, dishing out the serve was depressing.

If the "coalition" of voices expressing concern at the city move is "ragged", as Prof Reynolds wrote, it is because it is driven by a concatenation of concerns from the grassroots of our community and is led by a coalescence of ideas rather than the orchestrated groupthink that too often dominates public discourse.

The community backlash against the city move is like weeds growing in the cracks of a footpath: no one planted them, they grow of their own accord. They are resilient and hardy. They are real.

This type of public energy, when harnessed by a cause, is tireless and inspiring. It is the lifeblood, the heartbeat of a community. Such community concerns should be welcomed and publicly addressed. The community should be steering the course of its university, not faceless academics, bankers and real estate agents.

Therein lies the rub of this article. I hope this ragged coalition gets better organised and holds the uni to account. The uni will be better for it.

The city move crept up on the public. It has, slowly but



An artist's impression, above, of the engineering and technology buildings and public space, proposed for the former K&D site, and, right, the rejuvenated Forestry building in Melville Street.

surely, been happening for years under all our noses.

There are good arguments for parts of the university to be sited in the city. The Hedberg school of performing arts, next door to the Theatre Royal, is a fine example. The medical school in the same block as the Royal Hobart Hospital and Hobart Private Hospital is another. Mohammad, at times, has go to kunanyi.

However, the sheer scale of the city move slipped under the radar of the public, which is now waking up to the potential for it to have a seismic impact on the reputation of Hobart and how it functions, and on Sandy Bay, whose residents are justified in worrying about talk of 2700 new dwellings attracting thousands of new faces into their neighbourhood.

Together, the city move and Sandy Bay residential plans share some of the hallmarks — including the sheer scale and grandiose proportions — of the ill-fated multi-function polis spruiked nationwide 30 years ago. The design of the uni's city move is just as sanctimonious in its prodigious reach into the lives of the people of Hobart.

The community deserves

answers. You can't just unilaterally drop this redesign of the Tasmanian capital on the community.

The artistic impressions of the developed city blocks in Hobart smack of a utopian society or the heavenly scenes depicted in Jehovah's Witnesses brochures.

Tasmanians, especially those who live around Hobart, have every right to be worried

Tasmanians owe it to themselves to

Tasmania needs to embrace its cultural roots, writes **Bill Handbury**

GREG Barns in his recent Talking Point lamented that after a visit to the South Australian Art Gallery he was frustrated because we have nothing like it here in Tasmania.

Indeed, it is disappointing that every Australian capital city with the exception of Hobart enjoys large, modern purpose-created art galleries.

Our government argues that we have Mona, but as Greg Barns points out, notwithstanding Mona's magnificent contribution to the art world, it has a very narrow focus.

The government's Mona argument is lazy and should not be used as an escape from its cultural responsibilities.

We do have TMAG, which

combines the art gallery with a museum.

Significant space and structural improvements have been made over recent years, but unfortunately in trying to be both a museum and an art gallery with its restricted site, space and heritage compliances it is a failure.

Hobart having a National Gallery of Tasmania (NGT) is not a privilege but a right and must be seen in that light.

The current TMAG site is better suited as a stand-alone museum, particularly as

Tasmania's collection is extensive.

However, even as a stand-alone museum exhibits would still need rotations.

It's rather sad that the significant Allport Museum is tucked away in back rooms behind the Hobart Library.

Both the library and the Allport Museum are hardly in a user-friendly building, and the location is less than ideal.

There is a visionary solution to the given frustrations, which Hobart should dare to contemplate.

This starts by Hobart rejecting that it should be a cultural backwater.

When Australia becomes a republic, which is bound to happen when Queen Elizabeth's reign concludes, Government House will offer a wonderful opportunity for public use.

The grounds could be wed seamlessly into the Botanical Gardens, considerably enhancing that much-loved green space treasure, and Government House could become the state's major

museum combining the existing collection with the Allport collection.

It has the potential to be the nation's most significant museum.

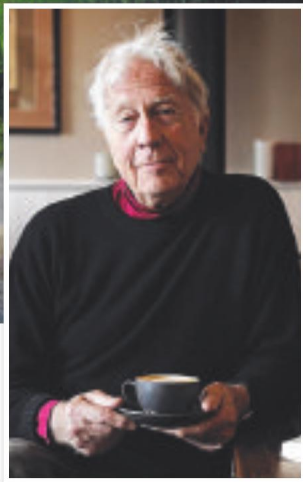
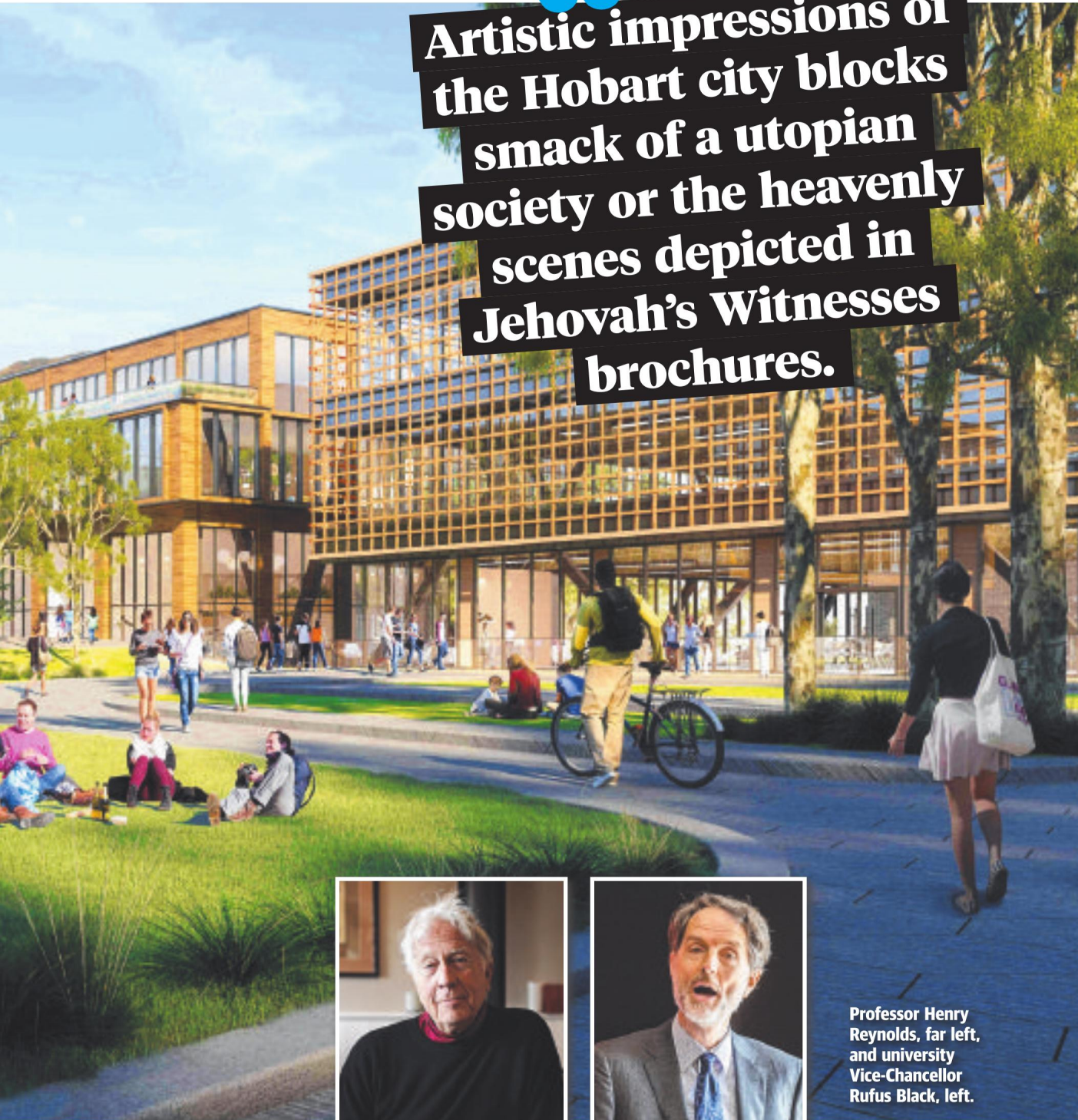
The exiting TMAG site could then become the State Library.

Better still, it could be an extended library incorporating the existing library with UTAS libraries. An amalgamation of libraries makes sense, particularly with UTAS moving to the city.

As an added bonus it could

more scrutiny

“Artistic impressions of the Hobart city blocks smack of a utopian society or the heavenly scenes depicted in Jehovah’s Witnesses brochures.”



Professor Henry Reynolds, far left, and university Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black, left.

at what is happening to their state capital. It’s their home; where they work and play.

There is already disgruntlement at what the Hobart CBD has become in recent years, with opposition to outrageous parking costs, lack of carparks and greenery, dearth of excitement, and impractical street design that frustrates motorists and is subject to traffic snarls.

The powers that be must come down from their ivory towers and stop acting with authoritarian arrogance, and accept that dissent and debate are integral to our democratic society and that the public

expects those behind such projects to explain and to be questioned.

Considering the flimsy nature of explanations by the proprietors of the city move, I tend to agree with a consensus

among correspondents who fear the project is less to do with education, city life and the community than with real estate and banks.

If that is the case, this foolishness must stop before it rips apart the social fabric of the state capital. If not, the uni must explain to the public.

This huge conglomeration of projects demands much more rigorous scrutiny.

Crying out to stop the duck hunt

It’s time we did away with the barbarism of duck hunting, writes **Ivan Davis**

DUCK shooting is a cruel enterprise.

Even shooters don’t shy away from the facts. For every bird killed, others are hit with shotgun pellets.

Some ducks take days to die, hiding away from their would-be killers.

It’s unknown how many killed and injured birds leave behind orphaned ducklings who starve to death.

The RSPCA and others continue to speak out against the cruelty.

Certainly, my efforts won’t stop the slaughter, but I must try because my perspective demands that I do.

You see, I’ve shot a duck. I’ve shot lots of critters but only one duck.

Mostly I’ve shot wallabies and kangaroos on Kangaroo Island, on the farm where I grew up and have regularly visited until recently.

I haven’t shot or in any other way killed another being for many years because that one duck’s mate may have been the slow start of an awakening of compassion in me that I didn’t realise could exist.

I used to like eating meat and I didn’t mind having to kill and butcher any animal’s body to do it. During my 23 years in the army, I never killed a human, but I never doubted my ability to do so.

One day, I got it into my head that I wanted to eat a duck’s flesh, so with a double-barrelled shotgun in hand I wandered past one of our many dams and shot at a couple of ducks flying overhead.

One immediately stopped flying and fell. Maybe two seconds later the other duck dived down following the first duck, before flying off just above the water and the

trees. I retrieved the dead duck’s body and returned home to pluck, gut and put the body in the fridge for cooking later.

Later that same day I was going past the same dam and there was a duck flying above the area crying out.

It was like no duck sounds I had ever heard. If I had the shotgun with me, I would have tried to put them out of their misery. I couldn’t know for sure that they were the companion of the duck I had killed, but at the same time it was obviously so.

That duck crying out affected me so much I came back with the gun the next day. The duck was still there, circling around the area crying out. I was a real bastard at the time, and I tried to shoot that duck out of their misery. I failed and (s)he flew off.

I never saw that duck or heard a duck cry like that again — except in my nightmares. The sanctity of life was a value starting to grow within me.

The official duck hunting season in Tasmania is upon us. Last year I joined protesters at Moulting Lagoon to deter birds away from the hunters. There were more protesters than hunters that weekend.

With waterbirds in eastern Australia in significant decline, there is no excuse for recreational duck shooting and the cruelty that goes with it.

A permanent ban on duck “hunting” is long overdue, and a set of principled and decent parliamentary members could make it happen.

Ivan Davis is a Senate candidate for the Animal Justice Party (Tas).

realise the state’s cultural potential

be a melting place for students and the local community.

Such an arrangement leaves us without an art gallery.

A new purpose-built art gallery funded by the state and federal governments on a new site is desperately needed.

The argument that the current art collection is too thin to warrant a new gallery is a nonsense. It can and should be augmented by permanent loans from the major mainland art galleries in

Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

They have stowed away significant collections many times the size of what they have on display, and they include fabulous works by female artists.

An exciting opportunity awaits Hobart’s NGT — it could be a premier gallery of female artists.

The logical site is Macquarie Point.

Years ago the government opened an office on the waterfront as a forum centre

for contemplating ideas for Macquarie Point usage, and in 2006 I made the suggestion an art gallery would be a most suitable inclusion. This idea, along with hundreds of others, faded into oblivion as the government did what it does best, it procrastinated.

Sadly, successive state governments have painted themselves as philistines because of their obsession with sport at the expense of cultural opportunities. The current government has a bottomless pit of readies for sport,

whereas cultural interests have to beg for pennies.

In a civilised society there should be an equilibrium of resources between sport and cultural facilities.

South Australia was fortunate to have Don Dunstan as an inspirational premier and champion of cultural interests. And when he left office, Victoria cleverly grabbed him for his expertise. At the same time Tasmania was obsessed with cutting down forests.

Clearly our government is

bereft of cultural talent, which is a major concern.

How to break down that barrier may be deemed nigh on impossible, but relentless efforts must continue.

We desperately need a Don Dunstan, do we not?

Don Dunstan sadly is no longer, and finding someone of his ilk is not an easy task, particularly in Tasmania.

Tasmania’s major political parties seem to ignore cultural interests in their preselection processes, which is a major dilemma. This appears to be

the root cause of many if not most of our political inadequacies.

Can this be a clarion call to dynamic young Tasmanians with a passion for cultural interests to break down the barriers of preselection bias and enliven our very pedestrian political environment, thus turning dreams into reality.

This is all possible, we just need the will.

Bill Handbury is a North Hobart artist.