Central Hobart Precincts Plan submission

December 2021

The RACT'S Greater Hobart Mobility Vision 30 Year Strategy, released in 2019, and the Central Hobart Precincts Plan, released in November 2021, are broadly aligned.

Their aspirations for a more vibrant, livable city are the same, and can be achieved by:

- A transformed mobility landscape with greater choice.
- A reduction in traffic congestion.
- An increase in population in the Hobart local government area as a result of more medium and high-density housing.
- More shared spaces and multiple-use zones.

While the RACT supports the scenarios of how Hobart might look and function by 2040, our view is that without solutions to traffic congestion, environmental impacts, and current parking and road infrastructure strategies that support the primacy of vehicles, the precinct plan will fall short of its aspirations.

Many of the transport solutions, although pivotal to the aspiration of the precincts plan, lie outside the control of the City of Hobart.

They extend to the role of the State Government, the other Greater Hobart councils (Kingborough, Glenorchy and Clarence) and the influence (in terms of growth, traffic and land-use planning) of Sorell, Brighton and the Derwent Valley, and the ongoing federal and state support of the City Deal.

Therefore the Central Hobart Precincts Plan cannot be read in isolation or delivered in isolation.

For example, there 18 separate transport plans that can be brought to bear on Hobart's complex transport problems and transport needs to create a more liveable city.

There is the Greater Hobart Metro Plan, which is expected in the New Year, which will influence policy choices for the City of Hobart.

And there is the Transport Network Operations Plan, which, as the discussion paper notes, is being developed in parallel with the Precincts Plan by the City of Hobart and the Department of State Growth.

The RACT vision

The goal of a connected and accessible city by 2042 is shared by the RACT.

We recognise that the private vehicle will remain the transport of choice for many Tasmanians and that for many the private motor vehicle is an aspiration and a necessity.

However, there is the capacity to drive a modest reduction in vehicle use that will significantly ease the congestion problems that have at times choked the city over the past five years.

That small reduction of 4% in private vehicle use can be achieved by a combination of factors:

- Changing work patterns.
- Land-use planning to deliver medium and high-density accommodation.
- Incentivising travel mode change through employers.
- Improving public transport with a better customer experience with real-time information, integrated ticketing, more flexible timetables and routes.
- Encouraging bus travel for schools.

Urban fringe car parks connected to the CBD by regular shuttle services and by cycling and walking routes will help deliver the changes in transport modes .

The RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision, published in 2019, lays out the challenges that the Central Hobart Precincts Plan seeks to address over the next 30 years.

https://hobartvision.ract.com.au/

Today the RACT's suite of policies reflect that wider focus and the concerns of our 209,000 members.

Those policies embrace private, public and active transport, the heavy vehicle sector, the environment, land use planning, and emerging technologies.

The overarching principle behind them is that they are fully integrated into a long-term vision to deliver a safer, sustainable environment in which to live, work and travel – the essence of the City of Hobart 20-year vision embodied in the Central Hobart Precincts Plan.

Unless all policies and all their moving parts work seamlessly together, we will not deliver on that vision.

It is that tightly integrated policy approach that is the foundation of our Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston Mobility Visions, which are strategies we believe will create more liveable cities over the next 30 years.

The vision considers infrastructure, land-use planning, public transport, active transport, social and community cohesion and future technologies.

The Hobart challenges

- Congestion has become a major issue for residents.
- Citizens are also raising concerns about the increasing environmental impacts from vehicle emissions.
- The private vehicle remains convenient, even as many people complain about congestion in Hobart and the extra time it takes to commute.
- Our public transport system doesn't yet offer the convenience commuters want.
- The RACT survey as part of formulating its Greater Hobart Transport Vision found that bus frequency, timetabling, complicated trips and delays were the major disincentives to using public transport.
- With the projections of population growth and increased vehicle ownership, the level of congestion that comes with that threatens the many other conveniences, amenity and livability that Greater Hobart citizens enjoy.
- Unless we deal now with the growth that will generate more traffic on a road system with very limited capacity for expansion, those qualities that make Hobart so liveable will be sharply diminished or lost over the next 30 years.
- With Tasmania having the oldest vehicle fleet at 13 years, the evolution to low and zero-emission electric and fuel-cell vehicles will take decades.
- We cannot build more roads -- the city's geography and the state's capacity to pay for bypasses or tunnels through existing funding regimes won't allow it -- and there are limited opportunities to increase capacity on existing key arterials.

Delivering transport solutions over the next 30 years will require at least two more 10-year City Deals.

To ensure long-term, fully integrated planning that is critical to Hobart's liveability, there should be certainty now over those future agreements with bi-partisan support required at all levels of government.

Since the publication of the RACT Greater Hobart Mobility Vision there has already been change forced upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a shift to working from home.

How the public and private sector deal with that change in the long term – and whether working from home is a sustainable option for employers and employees – should be the subject of further examination under the overarching transport strategy for Greater Hobart.

One of the issues that should be addressed is the tension between encouraging working from home or moving workplaces closer to where people live and the consequences for the Hobart CBD in terms of economic activity.

Complex solutions

The Central Hobart Precinct Plans is part of a complex set of solutions that must be tightly integrated to deliver consistent and sustainable improvements over the next 20 years.

We need to be talking about the entire puzzle, not just the individual elements as they are rolled out for public consultation.

The sets of solutions include:

- The Derwent ferry trial.
- The new Bridgewater Bridge.
- The Hobart Airport interchange.
- Tasman Highway duplication.
- Improved infrastructure to encourage active transport.
- A rapid-transit service using the current northern suburbs rail corridor.
- Land-use planning for more medium and high-density residential development closer to the city, including land adjacent to the rail corridor.
- Park-and-ride projects in the northern suburbs and on the Eastern Shore as part of improvements to public transport.
- An integrated ticketing and information system for public transport users.
- Real-time information for vehicle drivers.
- Changes in the way we work and the times we work.
- Information technology that encourages transport choices.
- How the University of Tasmania's twin projects – moving the campus to the CBD and re-developing the current Sandy Bay campus to commercial and residential use – can lead mode change.

Land use planning

Good land-use planning will be pivotal in delivering on the aspirations outlined in the Central Hobart Precincts Plan.

- We want to see Tasmania's planning system used to help reduce congestion.
- We want to see governments focus on how major development can impact traffic congestion.
- We support the development of settlement strategies for our cities that encourage people to live closer to work, school, public and active transport as well as community spaces.

The RACT wants to see all levels of government develop a settlement strategy for key urban centres. They must consider mixed-use hubs in urban areas that include infill residential development and densification in proximity to active transport, high frequency/rapid public transit, as well as employment, education, retail, services, recreation and community spaces.

Government should take account of future economic and social opportunities, including development, as well as minimise impacts to the road network by ensuring the community has universal access to a range of transport options.

The RACT supports the development of higher density hubs in existing outlying suburbs. These areas can also cater for the decentralisation of industries, services and attractions.

Government should also consider behaviour change programs that encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and make more efficient use of existing infrastructure. Those mode shifts will directly impact future land-use planning in the provision of transport options.

It therefore follows that the impact on road networks should be adequately considered during the assessment of residential or commercial development, particularly if there are mode shifts to public transport or shorter travel times because of the development of higher density residential and commercial hubs on city fringes.

The RACT has also advocated for limiting the size of urban growth boundaries to reduce the continued development of greenfield sites in outer Tasmanian suburbs and on urban fringes.

We also want to see local government and the State Government grant road authorities more control during the approval process for any development, to consider the impacts on road networks.

Planning policies should also consider the impact of emerging technologies such as electric vehicles and their associated charging-station networks, fuel cell (hydrogen) vehicles, and autonomous vehicles.