

**Speech by Gerard Castles delivered at the official launch of the Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania, Brooke Street Pier, July 6, 2017**

**Planning Matters Alliance Launch – Standing tall for Tasmania**

There's a quote that might or might be from Orwell or Burke or Churchill that goes something like this:

*Good People Sleep Peacefully in Their Beds at Night Only Because Rough types Stand Ready to Do Violence on Their Behalf.*

You might think this is a bit odd but Sophie Underwood and her confreres in the Planning Alliance are our “rough types” in this planning debate. It takes a certain type of person to fight the fight in which they are engaged. It takes courage to take on the vested interests of developers, their political mates and the entrenched inertia of the bureaucracy but this is exactly what Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania is doing – with courage and at personal cost. I believe it's time we all joined PMAT on the ramparts – let me explain why.

**The first point to make is that this is way bigger than the small print of regulations.** This is no trivial task. It's not about some arcane debate over rules and regulations. PMAT is engaged - on our behalf - in a battle for our Tasmanian identity. This is about who we are as a community and literally our common wealth.

I grew up here in Tasmania and have spent significant time working interstate and overseas. This has given me the outside in perspective. I now understand that what we have here in Tasmania is very very special. It's something we sense, we feel deep in our souls, and **it is also about what we these days call brand.** I raise this to make the point that this Planning debate isn't a debate about pro and anti development. It's about a high road or a low road strategy for Tasmania and what we stand for and the wealth we bequest to future generations.

Brand matters to a place like Tasmania – for two reasons. First, brand is highly valuable. It is ephemeral and yet it's immediately recognisable. It's all about reputation and point of difference. We know this. Hugo Boss, Caterpillar, Apple, BMW, Rolex, Mercedes and entities like MONA stand for a brand and they live it in everything they do and fight – literally - to preserve it.

The brand that is Tasmania is worth millions, perhaps even billions if you look at the value of education, services, food, visitor industries now and into the future as safe, clean, interesting, medium scale, highly liveable communities become more and more attractive. It will be our bequest to future generations.

The driver of this value is difference and that difference comes from deep inside our islands, our story.

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Not long before he died, I spoke to the venerated local arts patron and winemaker Claudio Alcorso, the father of Moorilla. I asked him which direction he thought Tasmania should take as we sat in the round room at Moorilla – now the entrance to MONA – then not even an idea. Claudio said Tasmania must be different. The future he said did not lie in mimicking Melbourne, Sydney or New York. He said that what people in our ever-shrinking world valued about this place was Tasmania's difference and quality.

Tasmania has that difference in the interwoven threads that make our story. It's about the place itself, it's about the intimate and delicate relationship between the people of this place and the land and sea and it's about the wild places beyond our immediate vision. It's also about our past – colonial and back before that into black history. It's an idea, a feeling something we sense and something that sets us apart and something we must value. It is at the same time strong and it is fragile.

Central to our brand is the fact that we are a place which has its early colonial architecture on show and it's a place unlike other cities that is not dominated by buildings piercing the sky. It's a place where the coast has not been trashed. What dominates here is the natural – mountain, forests, river and sky. These are intertwined and should not be undone. We are real in a fake world.

And, brand matters for a second equally important reason that is beyond the economic v. Brand is different for us than the corporate world. It's not a logo, it's about our Tasmanian way of life – it's about seeing the river, the mountain and the sky, the flora and the fauna of these islands. It's about space, the feel of the place and the way we have learned here to live together. Tasmanians feel this deep within our being, deep within our souls.

So, if this place has value, does the scheme enhance that value? No. The Planning Scheme opens us up to proposals like Fragrance Towers and worse that will destroy Tasmania and what makes us different. The towers might suit the sterile sameness of Singapore but they are not Hobart, they are not Tasmania. They say nothing – absolutely nothing of us, our story and who we might be.

Simon Currant named this up recently when he wrote about the strategy we should be following. He talked of us taking the high road towards quality not the low road towards high volume tourism. Fragrance Towers is on the low road.

The trouble is the Planning Scheme opens the door for rubbish like this. In a mindless stampede to demonstrate "we are open for business" the Government would sell us off as part of a low-brow push to drive up tourism numbers and get cranes in the sky.

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The Fragrance Towers ambit claim is just the start. There are other grenades hidden in the scheme – the way is being cleared for bogan developments on our coast, in our parks, next door to where you live and in the very places that make us uniquely Tasmanian. The scheme says nothing of aboriginal heritage. And, under the scheme we are essentially locked out from having a say. This is not what our brand, our community; our way of life here is all about.

So where does this leave us. I believe it's time we all joined The Planning Alliance on the ramparts. This Government like those before it only understand brute electoral force.

We must act. We've learned how Battery Point and Salamanca were saved by accident and how ugly eyesores like the Marine Board Building and Grand Chancellor were allowed to slip through. This cannot be so again. We need to make choices about what we stand for and have the courage to say no to Fragrance Towers and the other ugly, stupid development proposals that will follow. We must join with the rough types of PMAT and fight to ensure this Planning Scheme does not destroy our island and our way of life.

Thank you.

Gerard Castles PMAT Launch July 6, 2017