

Hobart Community Report

by Damon Thomas

Working to make Hobart the way it should be. Easy to live, easy to do business.

Alderman Damon Thomas

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Committee Membership:

- Finance and Corporate Services Committee (Chairman)
- Development and Environmental Services Committee
- Strategic Governance Committee

Representations:

- Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy Reference Group
- Audit Committee
- Carols by the Bay (Chairman)
- Christmas Pageant Organising Committee (Chairman)
- Festivals and Tourism Special Committee
- 50 and Better Centre
- Glebe Residents' Traffic Committee
- Hobart City Council Access Advisory Committee
- Lenah Valley Residents' Traffic Committee
- Mt Stuart Residents' Traffic Committee
- Sandy Bay Residents' and Traders Traffic Committee
- South Hobart Residents' Traffic Committee
- Superannuation Policy Group
- West Hobart Local Area Traffic Management Committee

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Damon's Vision for Hobart

Welcome to our first edition of the Hobart Community Report. Since becoming an alderman in November 2009 I have endeavoured to work hard for the people of Hobart and deliver on my pre election platform of *Leadership, Vision and Action*. This newsletter highlights the work so far by myself and other Aldermen in areas including; land tax reform, waste collection fees, and the vitality of the Hobart city centre. I believe Hobart is the greatest and most attractive capital city and my vision for the city is to help make it a more vibrant and progressive place to live and do business; I want to work with and access the State Government to achieve an agenda which places the HCC in a position where its medium and long term sustainability is secured; get better value and outcomes from the services offered by the Council; ensure equity and fairness for all as underlined by the HCC's values; and breathe life back into the CBD for retailers to prosper and the public to benefit from services offered. I conclude by thanking the people of Hobart for electing me to this very important role and my fellow Aldermen for their assistance and support in my first few months. I will continue to keep working hard to make Hobart the way it should be; easy to live, easy to do business.

Finance and Corporate Services Committee

On the 26 April Damon Thomas was elected Chairman of the Finance and Corporate Services Committee. The Finance and Corporate Services Committee is an internal committee responsible for providing financial and landlord property advice to the Council. Even though Damon has a strong finance background and is also the chair of the Audit Committee, Damon felt honoured to have had the support from his fellow aldermen in nominating him and voting him into the position. Through the Finance and Corporate Services Committee Damon is committed to continuing the Hobart City Council's good levels of productivity, efficiency, accountability and transparency.

Waste Collection Fees

An options report for the introduction of a waste management service charge was presented to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee in April 2010. Currently waste removal fees are based on a percentage of the value of rates. One of the values identified in Council's strategic plan is that of equity, and charging each property the same amount for a waste management service is deemed fairer and more equitable.

In May 2010 The HCC passed a motion for a staged introduction of a flat charge for waste management services based on the cost of bin collection as from July 2010. Damon Thomas said that "Business will reap an advantage from the reform whilst also making it more equitable and fair for households."

City of Hobart Vitality Study

Current trends are of concern with regard to the reduction of retail businesses within Hobart city (9.4% decline in 2007 from previous year) and reduction in employment by retailers (15% decrease between 2001 and 2006 census).

Furthermore, the conclusions of the Tasmanian Survey of Business Expectations released by TCCI in July 2009 demonstrated that there are threats to employment and investment in Tasmanian and the business community, centred on the Central Business District (CBD) of Hobart, needs to drive its own economic stimulus and the attraction of investment.

Hobart city is currently seen as lacking in confidence, focus and direction. It is increasingly being perceived as unattractive and a difficult trading environment for businesses to obtain retail return as well as there being

increasing concerns for safety .

This view, combined with the apparent lack of promotion of the benefits of the CBD of being able to access all services and facilities in the one area; to shop, go to theatre, meet friends for coffee, access professional services and dine in restaurants, leaves the central city area in a state of decline.

In April 12, 2010 Damon Thomas successfully put forward a motion for a City of Hobart Vitality Study to identify for the medium term future of the CBD the factors that combine to make the it attractive to investment and retain investment through providing an environment which makes the city an attractive place to shop, to trade and to live. The study will also consider the current intentions of the existing 950 businesses in the CBD to retaining their involvement,

increasing their level of investment, employing and marketing, and succession planning.

Damon believes that within its Governance role, the Hobart City Council must take responsibility and leadership in addressing these important issues.

The study will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders which include the State Government; the Property Council; Australian Retailers Association; Retail Traders Association; the Small Business Council and the TCCI. The project will also develop a meaningful survey to be conducted direct with city businesses. Focus groups may be considered to further refine project parameters and survey content.

The study is proposed for completion during the 2010 calendar year .

Land Tax Reform

On 23rd November 2009 Damon presented a Notice of Motion on Land Tax Reform - Economic Development.

The proposed report aimed to compare the various states and territories land tax regimes in order for the Council to form a view and lobby the major parties for significant changes to the method of calculation and the collection process of Tasmanian Land Tax prior to last year's State Election.

The Council used the report to seek commitment from the political parties on behalf of Hobart landowners to overhaul the current land tax structure in a realistic way that will help to promote the competitiveness, growth and prosperity in Hobart

rather than see it stifled by the current outdated regime.

At the meeting of 26 April 2010 the Hobart City Council motioned to advise the State Government that it supports the reform of Tasmania's Land Tax System and resolved to lobby government in support of a number of recommendations. Amongst the 7 recommendations proposed in the reform were;

- raising the threshold value before any tax is payable;
- introducing a lower percentage rate for land values; and
- providing an ability to pay tax by instalments.

The recommendations were supported unanimously by Council.

Let's Work Together

Working in Council is being involved in a decision making capacity for all sectors of the community. Representation at this level is about having an open dialogue with the community and carrying forward the wishes of your constituency, so it is therefore vital that I hear from you. My details are in the front of this newsletter and I welcome your thoughts and opinions regarding community matters, council initiatives, or perhaps even the future contents of this newsletter.

There are also opportunities to assist with other aspects of my work and reporting of activity at the HCC so please feel free to contact me if you would like to be involved. Cheers for now!

Damon