

LETTER TO THE EDITOR THE MERCURY NEWSPAPER, HOBART

13 MAY 2008

For those who may be concerned about plans for Sullivans Cove after reading yesterday's screaming headlines ("Plan has docks on the block", May 12) let me reassure you that the reality is far from what has been presented.

There is no plan to turn Hobart into Darling Harbour. In fact, we are striving for precisely the opposite – we want to retain our working harbour with a gritty urban edge. The Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority has repeatedly said this and it is baffling how this message could have been so blatantly misconstrued.

The same goes for the working port, which is a vital part of the vibrancy and appeal of the Hobart waterfront. It is part and parcel of Sullivans Cove, and will always remain so. To say otherwise is just plain wrong.

Of course, some parts of the port will change. That is inevitable. But for the first time in the history of the Cove, change is happening on the community's terms. In the past, our waterfront changed in response to external economic forces and the whims of trading partners, but these days we are in control of our destiny. We get to choose the type of waterfront we want.

The reality is that while many parts of the Cove work superbly well, other parts are run down and need reinvigorating. The Authority is working to ensure those neglected parts are improved in a way that is harmonious with the rest of the Cove, especially the working port, and we are freely sharing our findings with the community at information sessions such as Conversations in the Cove.

It is disappointing that some observers have chosen to misrepresent this dialogue – robust, hearty and very, very open – as some sort of secret master plan.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it's vital for the debate to continue, and I'm sure there'll be agreement on this from the many thousands of people who have attended our community events, visited our exhibitions and come into our office to talk about important urban design issues facing Hobart.

That's where the real debate should be, not blatant fiction.

Jeff Gilmore
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