



# CONVERSATIONS IN THE COVE

## 'The Nature of Good Contemporary Design'

4 August 2005

Dechaineux Theatre  
Art School, Hunter Street, Hobart  
Tasmania

### Guest Speakers:

- \* Professor Peter Elliott
- \* Leigh Woolley
- \* Robert Heazlewood

Moderated by Tim Cox

Conversations in the Cove is presented by  
the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority.

The Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority is the planning  
authority responsible for protecting, enhancing and  
developing Sullivans Cove and surrounding areas.

The Authority aims to preserve the unique qualities of the  
Hobart Waterfront, which defines the identity, vitality and  
image of the Tasmanian people.

# Thank You

Thank you for joining us for the inaugural **'Conversations in the Cove'**.

The Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority is pleased to host this series of free, informal discussions exploring themes and issues relating to the Hobart Waterfront and beyond.

Although set up in panel format, we trust there will be ample opportunity for lively discussion and audience participation during the course of the evening, as well as later when this transcript is circulated.

Our objective in launching these **'Conversations'** is to unpack some of the complexities that we all face in looking at issues in and around Sullivans Cove, and hopefully provide some enlightenment so we can move forward with confidence.

We hope this evening will be the first of many opportunities in which we can discuss matters of interest. Future events will feature local and visiting architects, urban designers, historians and planners who will debate the topics that affect the lives of all people who enjoy our Waterfront.

To help us to make these events as informative and enjoyable as possible, please do not hesitate to contact the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority with any comments you may have.

Once again, thank you for joining us in **'Conversation'**.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Brooks  
**Chairman**

Jeff Gilmore  
**Chief Executive**

# MEET THE SPEAKERS

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## ► Peter Elliott

Professor Peter Elliott is one of Australia's most acclaimed architects and urban designers. He is renowned for mixing old and new forms with clarity and precision.

He is an award-winning practitioner with more than 30 years' experience on public projects, specialising in the reinvigoration of underutilised urban space.

In addition, Professor Elliott is a well-known lecturer and writer on contemporary architectural design and practice, and is Adjunct

Professor at the School of Architecture & Design at RMIT University, where he has been teaching since 1982.

Professor Elliott's work has been widely published and exhibited and has won numerous Awards and Honours for outstanding architecture. This includes an Order of Australia in 1987 for services to architecture (public housing) and the Victorian Architecture Medal 1991 for the Carlton Baths and Community Centre.

Professor Elliott's work in Tasmania includes the Riawunna Aboriginal Education Centre and Faculty of Arts Precinct at the University of Tasmania, Launceston.

Professor Elliott is Head of the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority Design Panel.

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## ► Leigh Woolley

Leigh Woolley has worked extensively as an architect and urban designer for private clients and to all levels of government, within Australia, the UK and Southeast Asia.

He has received numerous design awards in architecture and urban design. He has been a Churchill Fellowship recipient to compare urban design policy in cities with dominant topographies.

An active member of the local profession Leigh has enjoyed an extensive relationship with Sullivans Cove for the past 20 years.

He also lectures and writes about architecture and urban design while his photography is held in state and national collections.

Leigh Woolley is a Member of the Hobart Waterfront Design Panel.

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## ► Robert Heazlewood

Robert Heazlewood is Executive Director of Brand Tasmania.

A former Managing Director of leading advertising agency MLB, Robert has been a powerful and passionate advocate of Tasmania for many years.

He has an extensive network of professional and personal contacts within Tasmania, Australia and the world, which he uses to spread the message of our State and its attributes.

The aim of Robert's work is to build on the established and growing reputation of Tasmania as a supplier of high-quality goods and services, a unique island and an exotic destination.

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Please note that this is an edited transcript of 'Conversations in the Cove'. It was compiled from audio recordings and while every effort has been made to ensure it is a fair and accurate representation of the event, some sections have been edited for reasons of inaudibility, relevance, grammar or length. If you believe any portion has been erroneously transcribed, please contact the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority.

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**Moderator:** I am sure a lot of you came here believing that Professor Peter Elliott might be a softly spoken, shiny-suited bureaucratic type. He is, in fact, the only person here with more shine to him than my freshly done head. He is wearing the pinkest shirt you have ever seen. And rather than me tell you about him, I think it would be much better if Peter told us a bit about himself and what his thinking might be. So would you be good enough to welcome Professor Peter Elliott, ladies and gentlemen.

**Professor Peter Elliott:** Thanks, Tim. The pink shirt is a bit of a giveaway, I know. I'm not a tie man either, so sorry about that.

Now, I am not going to talk much about myself. The point about tonight is the beginning of a conversation, and the idea of conversation is very much that various views are put. This is not a lecture – it is an indication of a way of thinking. So tonight there will be a mixture of some work out of the practice that I run and also examples of other architects' work.

But it is not just about architecture. It's really about an attitude – an attitude towards what we call the contemporary condition. My primary interest as a practitioner and sometime academic has been in the design of the city and in particular, the public realm and how people use public space. And the thing about pushing this idea or talking about the idea of the contemporary, is that it's very much an attitude about the time in which we live.

The simplest definition of contemporary is that it means 'of the present time'. And I take this to mean more an attitude or a sensibility or a way of thinking rather than a style, and it applies to all generations across all eras.

The first images I want you to see are some extraordinary buildings that were built in the early to mid-part of the nineteenth century, mostly in England. These extraordinary buildings were plant conservatories and they were synonymous with the industrial revolution. I find them utterly stunning. Can you imagine what they were like in 1815 or 1820, how extraordinary they would have been?

What I like about this building and others of its era is the way that it personifies the nature of the time in which it was built, and for me that means it is contemporary – contemporary of its time. It was a risk-taking building in every sense. In fact, it is hard to see how you could even build a building like that today with such frailty and fragility and beauty.

But it was possible by smart people with a sense of design and a sense of understanding about how to put together buildings and how to use the industrial revolution as a way and means of working. Things like prefabrication, standardised parts and machine-made things meant these buildings could be made in extraordinarily short periods of time, and yet they produced utterly inspirational buildings.

This next image is the Crystal Palace. I am sure most of you know the building that tragically burnt down, but there is a tree in the garden around which the building was built. And these other extraordinary-shaped buildings as well out of small fragments of glass.

Now these buildings are a product of their time, obviously, but they push the boundary and that's an important attribute, where there is a degree of risk taking but the result is inspirational.

[New image] We had an opportunity in the mid-1990s to design a new glasshouse, a new public glasshouse, for the City of Ballarat in the Ballarat Botanic Gardens, which are probably among Victoria's most important gardens outside the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. And the interesting thing was that this commission came second or third hand. The first architect that was appointed, a local architect, designed a pastiche building, which kind of tried to mimic the traditions of the glasshouse and some historical views about that. And interestingly, Ballarat, a very conservative town, rejected the design on the basis that it was a poor piece of contemporary work because it did not pass that test of, 'Is it of its time?', and so the commission came to us.

From my point of view, that idea of a connection to a history of ideas in architecture is particularly important. So obviously very aware of that great nineteenth century tradition, the idea for us in this building was to create something which is derived from origami. It is quite simply a flat piece of paper which is folded into that form and it produces an extraordinarily

beautiful piece of natural geometry. It is what it is because of the fold and there is no other way that it can fold. So this kind of complex and intricate web of steel and draped veil of glass is much like a crystal where it is variously solid and transparent depending on the angle and the time of day.

Glasshouses are wonderful buildings because they are chameleon-like structures. They transpire from the plants, obviously, and therefore it is wetter often inside than it is out. So they take on a sort of crystalline nature. They are extraordinary building types.

While it is not a big building, it is a demonstration of how a contemporary building can sit within the tradition of glasshouses and beautiful gardens. It was a really great act of confidence for the City of Ballarat. It had the confidence to commission a building like that.

***"...cities are really complex organisms. They are not static, they are works in progress and they change."***

[New image] Now the other kind of extreme is this – the view out of my office window in Melbourne. It is not an overly great view but it does remind me that cities are really complex organisms. They are not static, they are works in progress and they change. There is an idea at the moment that much of the

design of cities are kind of accidents or fragments of things that happen no matter how much we think we can control these things. It is largely not the way cities are made. It is about understanding the best attributes that cities can have and as a designer, you are trying to act as a kind of orchestrator or narrator or storyteller, weaving these stories among many prior histories. I think Melbourne now is going through another layer of buildings on top of other ones, and some sites have only one building and some have had several, so it is very uneven. But this idea that somehow as a designer or as a community you can control the growth of a city or what it looks like is probably just something that never happens, and that what we manage to do is much more selective than that.

[New image] Some of the lessons, I think, that I have found particularly helpful as a practitioner and as a teacher of architecture, are the lessons from some heroes, people in history that I like to admire. And one of those in particular is Italian architect Carlo Scarpa. This building in Venice is the Querini Stampalia Foundation. In 1961, Scarpa did an amazing new entrance into this building and a series of interiors. Now Venice is the pinnacle of the great cities and this was a great achievement for an architect to be able to work in a contemporary way, in this case in the underbelly of the building inserting a new residence and gallery space.

Scarpa is the master of gentle insertion within a prior history. And not only within the interior itself but the relationship between the interior buildings and a beautiful courtyard garden at the rear. It is a work of extraordinary beauty, the way in which it integrates both the contemporary from the 1960s while still looking fresh today. I was there last year for the 10th time and it is just one of my favourite places. And it just shows that someone like Scarpa, with his sort of understanding, the intrinsic qualities that come from an understanding about a place or a location or a building, is what makes for such fine work. It is this idea that one generation can work over prior generations.

I see very much that kind of history of good work in Hobart where the rate of change is much gentler and slower, and therefore so the degree to which changes occur.

Another interesting architect for me is the Slovenian Joze Plecnik, an early 20th century master of urban intervention, a little like Scarpa. This image is Prague Castle. Those of you that have been to Prague would have seen his work. It is almost not noticeable. There is a square in the central section of the castle with an obelisk, a small fountain, a doorway, the paving itself, a little view through a narrow corridor through to a flagpole... it is extraordinarily beautiful.

This idea of orchestrating urban space, of orchestrating things of small and delicate beauty within public space, is what Plecnik is well known for, and from my point of view he is an inspiration. He almost invented a way of working. Within this castle there is a little doorway

that leads you from one space to another. It is an extraordinary sort of dramatic unfolding of space. The whole of the south garden around the castle is the work of Plecnik and it is just one of those things where you feel this idea of the journey and the way in which he has orchestrated it.

[New image] Likewise in Ljubljana, a really beautiful city about the size of Hobart where Plecnik worked, there is a walk you can do around the central river which has Roman remnants, a little obelisk, a kind of archway again, a walking passage, a seat – it is a beautiful example of the way in which a skilled urban designer and practitioner can actually manifest a city into a theatrical event.

[New image] Back in Melbourne, we undertook this tiny little building, about three metres by four metres for the University of Melbourne. I suppose you would call it a kind of traffic office. It is a small example of this idea that you can graft a new piece of building on to an older host building.

***“It is not just about architecture. It’s really about an attitude – an attitude towards what we call the contemporary condition.”***

This idea of the graft and the host is something we have learnt from Scarpa and Plecnik. It is an interesting idea about the way in which new architecture grows on old or how one generation works on another generation. It is this idea that fine cities, good cities, are ones that understand their historical connections but are happy to make adjustments in time and do so with confidence.

[New image] Likewise at RMIT University, we worked for about a nine or 10-year period upgrading what was a really degenerated urban fabric and opening the university back into the city. It is this idea of taking what was an enclosed campus and refocusing it to connect itself back to the city.

[New image] This is again a series of relatively small interventions – groups of historical buildings, some more modern buildings and some strikingly modern contemporary buildings. And there is always this idea of the university as a day-and-night place and this idea that various kinds of lighting are treated more as theatre, as is space.

[New image] There are things to understand about the way in which public space is both a day and a night activity. This is the Old Melbourne Gaol courtyard, which is integrated within the complex of RMIT spaces.

[New image] And this is more recent work in North Terrace in Adelaide, the main civic space of Adelaide. It has the Museum and the Art Gallery and the Parliament and so on, and the redesign of North Terrace has been an interesting opportunity, again an exploration of the idea of public space where it is involved in the civic realm.

This idea of cities that I have been creating for you is like the palimpsest. It is this idea of overwriting or over-layering – the palimpsest is simply that you overwrite something else so there is a reading that you can have of cities, of places, of buildings and locations when you understand what it is about is an interesting way of seeing built fabric.

[New image] You are all familiar with this – it is the space next door. And I think it is a fine example of architect Robert Morris-Nunn layering history, of careful insertion of new contemporary pieces within a fabric. I think it is a very sophisticated piece of work and even the taxi driver coming from the airport today – that is always an interesting conversation – said “Oh, you are staying there, you lucky man, that is the best hotel in town.” I think these things are understood when they have those kinds of qualities; I think they speak to many people.

[New image] Here is a project we have just finished in Melbourne involving the renovation of the old Melbourne Public Records Office.

[New image] And this is a university building where we built a new library at the rear. It is a strikingly contemporary piece and for some people it is a little shocking, but on the other

hand it is surprising the number of people who see this building and stop in the street. It is not very big but it is an interesting example of a small sculptural object that sits within its context. It is an interesting example of the way in which a small new piece of building at the rear of a major public building, and then enlivenment of a courtyard at the rear, has brought new life to that complex and those buildings.

[New image] Another recent example in Bendigo, which is a town of a similar size to Hobart, is a new university gallery building in the main street. Again, a wide debate about the idea of how you fill the missing tooth. This was a vacant site in a street full of veranda buildings and our approach was not to put a veranda building there. It was quite consciously to provide a contemporary building. And because of its use it got a bit of press. In fact, the front page of the local paper called it 'Art Attack', which was pretty witty, I thought.

Interestingly, this was treated in the beginning not with hostility, but certainly with some misunderstanding and there was some considerable local community debate. The guy in the gun shop next door thought it was awful. But I think the attitude in the end is that people rise to the challenge when they are confronted, and this is the story about art as well. In this case there is a very fine piece of work on the façade that has been done by a local artist, Robyn Burgess, who was commissioned for this work, 'Future Cities'. It is an extraordinary didactic piece which has a shimmering effect on the façade. The idea of the building was simply that it was a veil. It was not really about the architecture itself, it was about the idea of bringing art to the street and expecting it to challenge people, and it does that. Interestingly, people stop and look and talk about it and then they go inside and they come out and say, "Oh, it is not so bad after all".

I think good design challenges people – I am unapologetic about that – but it does so in an intelligent way. It is not just about whacking it in for the sake of it, but it does so in an intelligent way.

***"It does not blend in, but that is not what it is designed to do."***

[New image] The last little project I will show here is not my work. It is the work of some very fine landscape architects – Taylor Cullity Lethlean – and this is from Geelong. And the

reason I show it is because I think Geelong is a good example of a city that probably never really realised its potential in terms of its location. It is a bit like the Yarra in Melbourne, basically misunderstood. The city turned its back on it. The Geelong foreshore was a pretty desolate place and the city was not connected to it in any way whatsoever. In fact, it was really just a bit of a drag strip and its transformation is quite extraordinary. It has really turned Geelong around to face the water and the city is gradually feeling its way back in towards the water in the way that initiatives like that do. You take energy and a good piece of contemporary design – in this case to effectively hold the foreshore – and it brings people, it brings activity, and it brings more things that would never otherwise have happened.

In this case, there are some very fine boardwalk areas, there are a mixture of timber areas and views to the water, there is a sculpture that is being commissioned. On the left there is a viewing brow that takes you out into the water as if you are on the brow of a ship. Again, people are just drawn to the edge of the water; it is a dramatic effect of sitting at the edge of the water. Where that water was washing in before, that is being transformed into an interesting sculptural edge to the water. There are views back along the water, night-time sculpture, and a rolling grass lawn connecting some of the more important older buildings. Probably the other thing that helped Geelong was moving the architecture school into the old wool store right on the waterfront so that the university has brought activity to the water.

This is a very fine piece of work that has taken several years to build and I think it demonstrates the idea of what good contemporary landscape and urban design can do to transform an otherwise unappealing location.

And that is all I have to say. The idea was to keep it fairly short and then the next couple of speakers will stimulate in a different direction, and then hopefully that will give us a range of things we might want to talk about thereafter.

**Moderator:** Thanks, Peter. It is interesting to see how you were quoted in the Bendigo Post – 'It does not blend in, but that is not what it is designed to do'. I thought that was interesting, we might come back to that a little bit later.

**Leigh Woolley:** I am Tasmanian and Hobart is my base. I practise from here and of course, good design will naturally be 'of its place' and 'in place'.

But what I would like to investigate briefly is how knowing one's place can assist in pursuing good contemporary design.

As a Tasmanian architect, I naturally seek to appreciate what makes this place distinctive. This is not merely a means to inform one's work but recognition that the sense of being here, and indeed of being at home, is significant in itself. It is this that provides the point of departure from which we orient ourselves, so in that sense it is a matter of locating Tasmania for me.

Just as the oceans and the weather define our separateness, so they also conspire to demand design solutions on our own terms. Hobart is a city with few friends 42 degrees south or beyond, and the conditions we face here are very much ones that we need to deal with. The design influences that come here with the warm currents are not the ones that come with the cold currents necessarily, and actually understanding the reality of this place on its own terms is significant to urban design and architecture.

I include this image of Tasmania with grey areas as land above 200 metres elevation. It is not to suggest that Tasmania is necessarily a place of great high ground, but what is significant is that the low ground is limited.

This means that elevation provides an enduring sense of prospect and orientation. It constantly presents and represents the spatial continuum so our sense of having high ground as part of the experience of our place provides conditions within place that offer great opportunities for orientation and for deep prospects through the land.

In that sense our dwelling region is one where there is limited built mass, but what is actually provided by the high ground is the sense of providing a natural urban focus where there is 'containment' provided by high ground around the water body but 'release' across the water plane, providing some of the deepest prospects of any city in terms of view lines in Australia from the central city streets.

And it also provides a counterpoint, if you like. I would suggest the inner harbour of Sullivans Cove has a counterpoint of the outer harbour. The experience of this is obviously realised in our daily experience here.

These deep prospects and constant orientation are provided within the experience of the landform, particularly the containment by high ground and also the extended views across the water plane. The role of landform in determining the city and its built form is therefore very much characteristic of this settlement.

I suggest this is a process of 'building topography', that the feathered edge of the headlands links sky and water. They lead the eye to the water plane datum. Their role in providing orientation within the region is fundamental.

And, indeed, the built form of the city infers and reflects the landform character beneath as water courses are found between bodies of existing settlement.

But the margins of settlement can be appreciated both vertically and horizontally. The Cove is distinctive within this place because it is a built topography – a horizontal margin.

The reclaimed space of the Cove is identified here [image] and the original shoreline is shown dotted. I suggest it is distinctive because it is here that the natural landform gives way to the negotiated margin between land and sea. It substantiates the 'harbouring' role of the Cove, and through this the identity of Hobart as a port city.

And I suggest that when we start to look at this in terms of how that might be interpreted, this differentiation is no where more obvious than through the spatial character of the walls and aprons, essentially those 19-century buildings which more or less define the original waterline or areas where natural land occurred.

And this sense of the spatial character of the Cove is very much an obvious translation between both the 'natural' and the 'reclaimed' – the wall of buildings along that edge and then subsequent development of the concrete aprons – and this starts to suggest a differentiation between the 'given' and the 'reclaimed', and perhaps even the 'civil' and the 'raw'. It certainly differentiates the natural rise from the uniform apron.

And it is this sense of differentiation that really identifies the character of Sullivans Cove and its current spatial – very strong spatial – structure.

And because it has that very strong simple spatial structure, because it is very utilitarian, a range of cultural activities occur that are perhaps unique to this place but maybe not, but certainly within the Cove opportunities arise for activities that are often surprising – wood chopping carnivals on Franklin Wharf or 'The Longest Table' in Salamanca Place – so this most vital margin of the city, the reclaimed edge including the aprons, accommodates a range of cultural activity.

Allowing for this essential 'changefulness' substantiates the Cove's civic role within the State. That is not possible without this simple, robust structure, particularly the highly functional engineering associated with the apron and port activities.

But of course that which most identifies a port is the movement of vessels, and here again is a constant reminder of built scale counter-posed with landform scale. As a civic domain it is also the place where orientation within the extended setting is sought. To the south, St Georges Tower builds the topography of Battery Point, while to the north the Cenotaph identifies the headland of the Domain. In this sense there is the landform, assisted by built form, providing the means of negotiating this setting.

The advantages of being a quieter, greener and more reflective place need to be pursued spatially through design. Hobart is a 'small city in a large landscape'. It ought not see itself as a small city that needs to be larger necessarily, but indeed a city defined by its relationship with its extended setting, with that spatial continuum. And it is that which creates an identity, certainly for the city and indeed for the Cove.

Contemporary design, in all its manifestations, inevitably deals with this across scale and topography – it is an investigation of the experience of being here. And for me at the scale of the dwelling, some of these similar issues present themselves.

There is always the need to interpret topographic scale and often there is the opportunity to actually deal with a development margin. You are constantly finding that in Hobart. The need to actually interpret topographic scale, but also to reorient in order to extend the sense of appreciation of setting and its scale, is something that is a constant joy to architects working here.

In many projects, there is the opportunity for the sense of containment and indeed release within both site and dwelling planning and that will inform projects and also scale the sense of the setting for those within the buildings that one designs for. Equally, the role of the 'feathered edge' is used to enhance orientation.

*The advantages of being a quieter, greener and more reflective place need to be pursued spatially through design. Hobart is a 'small city in a large landscape'*

And so for me to deepen our sense of what it is to dwell here will be to consider the true scale of this city and its public realm, which extends well beyond the built.

For me, this is the appropriate role of contemporary design within this place.

**Moderator:** We cannot have any discussion or consideration of Sullivans Cove – its importance to us and its iconic value – without thinking of visitors to our State. And a good person to put that into some sort of context for us is Robert Heazlewood, Executive Director of Brand Tasmania, and then we will get into some questions together.

**Robert Heazlewood:** Thank you. I found that stuff fascinating and I am sure you all did. It is the sort of thought-provoking stuff that gets you thinking about what are we trying to achieve, what do we want to achieve, and how that might change the way we are perceived or the way we live, or the way we go about our daily activities.

I was talking earlier to Peter Elliott about one of my earlier ventures. I was working on a film in Western Australia many years ago, back in the 70s, for BBC Television and it was about architecture in Australia. And I was way out of my depth there as well, and happy to admit it, and I remember talking to a professor of architecture at WA University and I said to him, "Isn't that building across the road a fantastic building", and he looked at me and said "Yes, it is a nice piece of period architecture, but this building here [pointing elsewhere] is something that happened once in one man's mind".

And I have remembered that quote ever since, "Something that happened in one man's mind". And Peter and Leigh have taken me through a journey tonight of things that happened once in one man's mind, and I think, "Yes, it is about place and it links that contemporary thing so well".

We should not try and repeat something that was done before, and we should not try and think about things as having to be the same. And that brings me around to the Brand Tasmania thing. We have just recently done quite a serious amount of research to try and determine how people interstate see us.

We have a sense of values that we thought that Tasmania was all about and we were pretty confident about those, but even so we decided to check them very recently. The good news is, we were pretty much spot on. And one of the strong things that came out was our lifestyle – we had this strong envy from people in Sydney and Melbourne about our Tasmanian lifestyle.

Another thing we found out from Tasmanians – because we did the focus groups down here as well – was that Tasmanians value their lifestyle more than they have ever done. So you would have to say we are doing something right and that things are evolving in the way we would want them to in any intelligent society.

But the other thing that became absolutely apparent is that the strongest of the values, apart from quality, was the authenticity of what we were offering – authenticity about our lifestyle and I suspect that which goes right through to the buildings.

We don't try and copy things. We're never going to be a Gold Coast and we should never be that sort of thing. It is about an authentic appreciation of Tasmania in a contemporary sense and our place.

I thought that was really good confirmation that we needed and when I looked at these pictures tonight I thought, "Fantastic", especially when I looked at that one of Salamanca Place because I can remember not that long ago when Salamanca Market was an idea that happened once in one man's mind.

I think his name was Dr Clementi, and he pioneered and banged his head against the wall for many, many years to try to get this idea up, but the bureaucracy was saying, "No, we don't want that, we can't do that, we can't have food outside, for God's sake food will go off if you have it out in the sun."

Now you sit back and think, this horrific thing that we were trying to be protected from, Salamanca Market, has become one of our icons. And we've actually evolved to the stage where, yes, we're not that afraid of change, and we're not that afraid to look at challenges and let's debate them.

And that's one of the great things about this place where we live. With that I think I am probably out of my depth again, so thank you.

**Moderator:** Leigh, I would like to ask you about a point that Peter made. He spoke about a city as a work in progress. Do we embrace that idea very much, do you think?

**Leigh Woolley:** Inevitably. It is interesting for me having photographed this city over the years how much change has actually occurred in Hobart in the last 25 to 30 years. Indeed

cities are never finished. That is their nature, that is their role, so it is always a work in progress and always there are the intellectual ideas that make cities continue. That is the great enjoyment of studying cities.

**Moderator:** Peter, given the ideas we saw in some of your photographs, how do you scale that to Hobart when you look at the photographs from Leigh?

**Peter Elliott:** Leigh's photos are amazing. I think the drawings are particularly good as well. That is the great thing about a beautiful drawing – it distils an idea. I think that map of the bum of the world, that little ring around it showing that there is only one other place that's on 42 degrees south, is wonderful, as is Leigh's ability to weave this story about the place and landscape.

Hobart is a unique place and one of the pleasures about coming here as a visitor is that refreshing sense you get as you come over the bridge and down not such an attractive arrival experience at the moment, but we are hoping that one day that might be more beautiful. Then arriving in Hobart proper and arriving at the Cove floor and the sense of where you are. It is an extraordinary, beautiful city and those qualities are quite evident, and that is what makes Hobart the town that it is.

I think there is an idea that as Australians we travel a lot, we read a lot and we bring these understandings to our own locations, and that is the benefit of an intelligent conversation, that you are not looking to use those things here, but you are using the lessons of those other places to help understand this place better.

**Moderator:** Peter, you are quoted as saying, "It does not blend in, but that is not what it is designed to do." What was in your mind and what sort of questions were being asked, and what sort of demands were being made of you around the creation of that building in Bendigo?

**Peter Elliott:** In that particular case I was stirring the journalist, frankly. I knew that I was being set up. To a degree what was interesting was the early process, and any architect will tell you this sort of story about the kind of agony you go through in presenting your work for critique, because that is what essentially happens. This is a public activity that we undertake.

The local council was pretty unconvinced about the idea. They took a lot of convincing that this would be a fine building. Interestingly, there was enormous support from the artistic community in Bendigo, and you could see that there was the beginning of an awakening of an idea that there are other ways of doing things – that when you design an infill building it doesn't have to automatically look like the building next door.

I find this conversation can go around and around, so I am quite clear, I made my position about that. So when you say it doesn't fit in, it becomes part of a provocative part of saying it is not meant to because it is about something else. Then you can start the conversation about what is that something else.

It is not about trying to be smart. It is about suggesting that there are many ways of reading architecture and its role, and its place in a continuum over time.

**Moderator:** We saw photographs of Geelong earlier. Here is a city that has gone through a very large metamorphosis in quite a short time. Burnie is also wrestling with this and the question of waterfront development, and perhaps a move away from being an industrial maritime city. What do you think about when you look at Geelong or perhaps some place like Fremantle?

**Robert:** Fremantle is a bit different. I think often these things are about place, but it is also about time. Fremantle was reborn because of the America's Cup and that was a catalyst to get things going, but I was absolutely amazed by Geelong. It was a long time since I had been there and had a good look at it, and I thought it was a different place. It is a rebirth almost.

Peter talked about turning it around, and that has to happen so much because you often end up looking the wrong way in cities and then suddenly you say, "Let's go that way" and suddenly it becomes a new city because the energy goes to that spot.

I think it's happened in North Hobart, a place where people used to hurry through. Now you go up there and it is a place of energy. It has a nice contemporary feel about it but it is well mannered enough to be a part of what it was.

This is for me an evolution. I grew up in Burnie, which was the sort of place you looked forward to getting away from, really. When I go back there now there is a sense of pride about the city, it is probably the best painted town in Tasmania. You look at it and say, "People are proud of what they are doing here – They are proud of the way they live and they thought about the way they have developed it."

**Leigh Woolley:** Certainly, cities around the world that have taken to heart their sense of where they are and their place are returning to their natural assets. But we happen to have them – we haven't yet lost them.

There are a number of cities that are actually revitalising waterfronts long since redundant, unlike ours, which is still albeit the critical thing – that movement of vessels, that sense of movement in and out, albeit limitations on freight, there still is a lot of activity. But the natural assets, waterfronts, creek beds, streams, visitors or accessible land forms, are all part of the revitalisation and contemporary urban design of many cities around the world.

There are examples around the world to learn from, but we don't need to. We have got so much here that we need to still learn from, that we haven't yet lost.

**Member of audience:** One of the main priorities should be the creation of public space that attracts a wide section of the community, so you then have a vitality that attracts even more people and it becomes a good place to be. The atrium in the Henry Jones Art Hotel was shown earlier as a public space and it was certainly advertised as one, but for me this building represents the things I fear most about what might happen to the public space in the future of the Waterfront.

The Henry Jones atrium has become a privatised area, it is not a place you can spend time as a public space in its true sense. I would hesitate to take my sandwiches and eat there, or my sleeping bag so I can sleep there.

This has also been the case at Watermans Dock. Recently we have had large private ferries berth in that small, little space that allows pedestrians a really magical experience at the same level as the water. The vista now from Parliament House gardens across to the Henry Jones Art Hotel has been totally lost by a big ferry parked right in the middle. These are the sorts of things that make me worried about the future and I was wondering whether there are a set of principles that guide good contemporary public space.

**Peter Elliott:** I think you have misunderstood a little bit of what I was saying about the IXL building. I didn't refer to that as 'public space' – I was referring to that as an idea of how you are able to generationally work over a building so it has a new life. It has nothing to do with public space. That is a misunderstanding – I am sorry if that was created that way.

So put that aside because it is not the kind of place where you are going to take your lunch, I know. I just thought it was a particularly good example of that kind of intergenerational idea of how sensitively you can reuse a structure because a lot of the future of what we see here is to do with having a working port, and most of the examples that we have talked about tonight are cities with derelict waterfronts which have had to be rebuilt from scratch.

Hobart doesn't have that – it has an active port and that is a great attribute. You shouldn't be fearful because one of the main tasks that I see as important – and I know this is certainly shared by Leigh Woolley and Barrie Shelton and the others on the Design Panel – is defence of the public realm.

I also agree with you about that boat. It just shouldn't be there, it should be somewhere else. There is plenty of 'somewhere else' where it could be.

This idea that a public space is public and legible, and that the kind of pathways and routes between various locations on the Cove floor need to be done, I call this housekeeping. These are not radical things; they are quite simple things. They don't change things a lot, but they just make things that much better.

One of those things is to do with cars. I think it is important that there is a mixture of some cars on the Cove floor with pedestrians, but it is a bit too much the 'car' way and should be a little bit the 'other' way.

The boat blocks the view and your orientation through to Salamanca Place, and there is a precarious road crossing that needs to get better. These are things that are open for further discussion but they are the kinds of simple things that will make the Cove better without radical change.

**Moderator:** Can I just get a line from you as well, Leigh, on that. You talked a couple of times about the movement of vessels and, of course, that experience of transporting.

**Leigh Woolley:** It is interesting, that built scale of movement of vessels, isn't it? These huge elements come in and you actually realise the built scale of your own city. It is not quite as large as you might imagine it to be. But, of course, ports harbour vessels. The harbouring is a verb, and if they lose vessels they are no longer ports. That's where the revitalisation of waterfronts tends to not be what we have in Hobart, because we are actually still harbouring vessels. I also have particular opinions about vessels that don't move, that are being harboured, but that is another issue.

In terms of this issue of public space, even the space in Jones & Co, it's really tough to get new work that is commercially developed that has some public function. Indeed the Jones & Co atrium and the Jones & Co development is a commercial development, yet it actually embodies the public memories of that site. That's a role that the architects have achieved, I think exceptionally. It does have a public atrium; not 24 hours, not such that you can take your sleeping bag there, but it certainly is more public than many commercial developments.

Our role on the Design Panel, of course, is one of being very cognisant of the real public realm and as Peter said, to work in defence of that and in defence of its real character.

**Member of audience:** The space in the Henry Jones Arts Hotel was never intended to be public space. It is actually being brought back to life after being burnt down by squatters. I totally agree that we shouldn't take public space away from the people because that wouldn't be right, but where space is being converted then that is giving it back for what it was meant to be. If you gain something from that process, terrific; if we are losing something, then let's have a grizzle; but if we are not losing something, then let's get on with it.

I am also interested in the differing opinions about what happens to the Waterfront. Quite clearly there are different views in the sense that some people are saying that modern contemporary assignments reflect the attitudes of the day, others are saying that it is more about authenticity, and others are saying that it has got to be challenging. That really is the debate that we have all been having for the last 10 years plus. I am looking forward to it but for now my question is this: how are you going to go to engage in the process and how will you influence public and private activity.

**Robert Heazlewood:** I think I might have misled you. When I was talking about authenticity, I wasn't talking about creating something that is a copy of what was there before or what currently exists, to make it look like it was authentic. The message we were getting back from the research is, don't give us a copy. If you have to move on in time that is what you should be doing, rather than creating something that is a classic period building in the year 2000.

**Member of audience:** But what are you guys actually going to do?

**Peter Elliott:** Our role is pretty straight forward – we are an advisory panel and we are supposed to be experts, I guess, in some sort of way. The intention is that we assist the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority in developing principles, and by and large working to the document that has already been in the public arena for some time, the Hobart Waterfront Urban Design Framework, which I happen to think is a particularly good document, and a fine example of the kind of document that is well placed for outlining the principles that we have seen in Leigh's presentation tonight – it brings clarity to understanding the landscape and the place.

Our role is to help develop that further. We don't do anything other than give advice about what comes before the Sullivans Cove Waterfront Authority. We comment and hopefully assist.

Something that we are talking about at the moment, for instance, has to do with the future of the Brook Street Pier, a ramshackle kind of affair that will get upgraded presumably, and our conversation is about the principles by which it might be upgraded.

Another conversation is about the arrival experience of coming into Hobart. At the moment it is neither one thing or the other. It is not really a great landscape solution or a road condition.

Our idea is to open up these things for wider discussion and hopefully out of that as a city you will end up with a better outcome in terms of the design activity that will take place.

**Moderator:** Would members of the panel like to comment on the way that reclaimed land is used for cultural activities, and how you see the future in a modern city like this one?

**Peter Elliott:** I think it is one of the great attributes of the Cove generally, and it is almost a historical accident. The fact that Hobart was a working port meant that you ended up with these large concrete aprons which aren't separated by curbs or other obstructions and it was simply because it was a working port and they needed that area for circulation.

You probably wouldn't design a public waterfront quite like that now, but you have it. What we as the Design Panel feel particularly strongly about is not interrupting that too much, because there is a great flexibility about it. It is able, on the one hand, to continue as a working port, and then for special events and occasions it is transformed into a place of great cultural activity or an event space.

I think that is the kind of understanding you need to know about so you don't start putting more 'stuff' in there, so stuff gets in the way and prevents the opportunity for activity.

**Member of audience:** Are we in danger of over-extending the platform or allowing buildings on the edge of it, or even pushing larger boat storage areas further out into the Derwent. I'm concerned about the loss of views from Elizabeth Street to the harbour. Are we in danger of cutting off the city, especially when you consider the impact of the CSIRO building, at least two restaurants and the Marine Board Building, some of which are mistakes. Can we stop this taking of the harbour further away?

**Peter Elliott:** We hope so. Projecting forward in time, the degree of change we can expect in Hobart is relatively gentle. It is not the kind of city that has enormous amounts of redevelopment occurring. The Urban Design Framework makes that really clear. Where you have a scale-sensitive zone – and the Cove floor and concrete apron are scale sensitive, and they are also view-sensitive – then that is where you need the most amount of caution about what would happen.

I personally don't feel that you should have fear about that. We don't know who is going to come forward with any proposal for a new development, but equally I think there is a very strong resolve in terms of design quality and urban space and protecting the view line and maintaining the character of the waterfront, that that is not the place where you want major change. It is likely to occur in the future in the railyard or somewhere else.

But there is a transition that is occurring. There are a large number of buildings on the waterfront over time that will be vacant, and they should be put to better use, and I think that you need to, as a community, be thinking, "What will this waterfront be like in 25 or 30 or 50 years' time?" Not what is it today and we don't want to change it, but you have to think creatively because cities can't stay still like that. You have to actually think forward and plan creatively for it.

I just think it is very important as a city you start to think forward on these things and it will help you understand what are the things of value and what are the things that you don't want to change.

**Leigh Woolley:** I think this point is an interesting one because we have had piers there in the past. So that sense of the harbour being pushed out is a contemporary view of the

experience within Hobart. The change that has happened is that the civic role which those aprons have now is much more of a focus of a whole sense of this place than it has ever been.

I think it has more to do with – and I think your point about CSIRO is an important one – this city isn't perfect and we can only hope to constantly make it the best we can.

I think it is very interesting to look at the place that, from memory, was where access along the actual apron edge was first denied – when the Commonwealth took over Princes Wharf 3, long before there were security concerns and long before the other port operations that were happening on the other side of the Cove.

I think there are benchmarks about the change of public access, the sense of who has access to the public realm, what is the public realm here?

The public realm here is the biggest in the country because it includes the water plane, it includes the Wellington range. The public realm is in fact the space that you experience from the centre of the city, and that is big. Settlement is small but the space is large.

Our access to the margins of that space, the most critical edges and the waterfront one, has always been that. It has been a right that has been, for operational reasons, marginalised in terms of access.

All of that has to go into the mix of actually looking at how we continue to manage not just the historical access, but the contemporary reality of what the place is. I find it really disappointing for security reasons that parts of the Cove are no longer accessible.

**Member of audience:** If you go further down towards Sandy Bay, you now have a boat path taking over public access and public use of the waterfront. We seem to be losing it all of the time.

**Leigh Woolley:** There are issues of the public being more assertive about its desire for its access.

**Member of audience:** You presented 42 degrees South as a marketing and promotional opportunity, especially if links with New Zealand are regenerated. Is there a benefit for Hobart in making the point it is on a pretty rare latitude?

**Robert Heazlewood:** I am pretty strong on differentiation. The thing we have got going for us here is our difference. I would be more about saying that we are different from those places at the bottom of the world and that is the way we want to stay. That is not putting them down, just talking up our differences.

**Leigh Woolley:** It also means you take the best knowledge from the world but you actually recognise that at the end of the day you are dealing with it yourself, on your own terms and on the terms of this place.

**Robert Heazlewood:** Just on access, I can remember when the steel boat race went around the world and they stopped here, in Auckland, Cape Town and then back home to the UK. I can remember talking to the people that were on the boat and they said, "You just can't believe how good this is." The thing about stopping here is, people feel totally secure. They are right in the middle of a city and it is a friendly place, a total experience. I think that is what Leigh was talking about there – don't forget about the people, that is what makes it all work.

The end