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"What Passing Bells for those who die as urban activists" \*

I wish with respect to make a submission to the above inquiry under item 6 *any other matters incidental thereto*.

I wish to use Battery Point as a 'case study' and also before doing that wish to make a preliminary comment.

The City of Hobart had arguably the best examples of Georgian sandstone architecture in the Southern Hemisphere, not only in Salamanca Place, but along Davey Street and Macquarie Street, but it has almost all gone, mostly with the permission of the Hobart City Council (HCC) to demolish and in certain circumstances without that permission.

### **Battery Point**

When complaints were made to the HCC Alderman about the demolition of certain buildings, the standard reply was 'we can't stop developers, owners they have the right to develop their land'.

The HCC did not ask the State Government for the 'power' to protect the early European build heritage of Tasmania, and I believe had no wish to do so, because they were more concerned with the rateable increase that would flow from the demolition of a sandstone home and the new increased value of the development.

There was no interest to preserve, enhance and restore the old homes, the very early European build constructions that were along Davey Street, Macquarie Street and the lesser ones, workmen cottages that were in Montpelier Retreat and in Battery Point.

The HCC had an early town planning advise that would have brought vehicular traffic into Hobart along Davey Street into Castray Esplanade, up Runnymede Street, demolish half of Arthur Circus, join up with Colville Street, then down Colville Street hill and along Marieville Esplanade and join the Sandy Bay Road at the DSS yacht club.

The old Prince of Wales hotel was the forerunner of this proposal, along with the area between Kelly Street and South Street, listed for demolition, the site to be used for a supermarket and high-rise like 'Empress Towers' to emulate Potts Point in Sydney.

The sandstone Georgian warehouses in Salamanca Place were to be demolished as dilapidated rat infested hovels. Unfortunately the cottages and shops in Montpelier Retreat have been demolished, sadly after the developers got into the area, took away the doors and any other items of value and left the houses to disintegrate and finally some were actually burnt.

There is a fine Georgian Sandstone now belonging to the TMAG in Hampden Road called Narryna.

There was a twin of Narryna in Secheron Road, leading to Secheron House, 'Avon Court' with stables and a small kitchen garden and fruit trees. The new owners applied to the HCC to demolish it and build flats. The response from the Aldermen was words to the effect of "there is no way we can stop the demolition and the rate increases from the units to be built there will benefit the Hobart city council".

The local progress Association, The Battery Point Progress Association Inc (BPPA) \*\*lobbied the HCC and when that proved useless and then the state government, in the meantime Avon court was demolished and units constructed.

The BPPA then lobbied the state government for a 'Battery Point protection legislation' and the Bill was actually passed in the lower house.

When the Bill reached the Legislative Council, the HCC lobbied Upper House and had the Bill adjourned. The HCC did not give in easily and the 'second green ban in the nation' was proposed and put on Battery Point and Salamanca Place in an attempt to stop further demolition.

The HCC then had town planners called Gazzard Clark to prepare a plan for the preservation of Salamanca and Battery Point.

The HCC then inherited the authority to ensure that the town plan for Salamanca Place and Battery Point was implemented, as opposed to the Bill which had planning authority invested in a tribunal.

The state government at the same time recognised that Salamanca was an important part of the heritage of Hobart and purchased the centre of Salamanca Place where the 'art centre' is now.

Further lobbying of the Nielsen Government caused the state government to purchase the Hunter Street buildings.

The government created legislation for the 'Sullivans Cove' which removed Salamanca Place from the area covered by the Battery Point planning scheme.

The Battery Point planning scheme in, in effect imposed on the HCC by the state government, did not sit happily with the HCC and in some of the planning decisions failed to implement the scheme properly.

The BPPA has not 'taken on' developers when they have proposed a development in the BP area, and have pursue the decision-making in the HCC through the planning process and have won most of the planning appeals.

I spoke to a recently retired planning officer from the HCC who advised me 'that the HCC had not had received recognition for what it had done for Battery Point'.

The attitude of the ex planning officer was outrageous.

The HCC was, in my view, a development authority, not concerned with implementing the Battery Point planning scheme strictly, tended o favour the developers and the BPPA then had to fight the Council's decision through the planning process, which in effect had the community ( ratepayers) fighting the elected body ( representing the ratepayers) rather than have the developer to fight for their proposal under the Battery Point planning scheme.

The HCC simply had not done the job that they promised when the Battery Point protection bill was withdrawn from the Upper House, that was to preserve enhance and protect the built heritage of the second oldest city in Australia.

The State Government proposed State Heritage legislation for individual houses and that legislation should be amended to include areas, especially where there are streetscapes to be protected.

Further due to the lack of competent reform for local government, when the HCC is criticised for not implementing its own plan, ie, Battery Point planning scheme, Aldermen seem to resent the criticism because they want to assist developers, and they fail to see that protecting heritage is the future of development.

Not only do some Aldermen like to criticise communities associations which they are meant to represent, but they seem really get some satisfaction from being deliberately obstructive to those in a community who have a voice and express it.

If it is not a two strong parallel, I see some Aldermen in relation to Battery Point like the four-wheel drivers driving on the sensitive shoreline on the West Coast saying that they have the right and they will exercise that right and getting some more frisson from driving over middens which in the future will become one of the most important heritage aspects of Tasmania ie Aboriginal heritage, which is sometimes carbon dated to 40,000 years when the BPPA is only trying to protect heritage that is less than 200 years.

If one stands in front of the Silos in Castray Esplanade and looks northwards, there is for a limited time, a scene that is almost unchanged, if you ignore the shipping, Hunter Street is almost unchanged for 150 years.

When the Battery Point planning scheme first came into operation, the public comment was that 'the scheme would put a 'dead hand' on Battery Point.

In the 1950s when Battery Point was considered a slum and no one wanted to live there, it has had renewal and part of that is due to the planning scheme.

Battery Point is now a tourist mecca along with Salamanca Place for a place to walk and browse.

If the early planners had had their way, Salamanca would not exist now, nor Battery Point. My suggestion would be that planners and Aldermen should have a briefing on the importance of heritage especially when it is something different from most other places.

When tourist ships come in, a small majority of people simply walk around the Point and appreciate and admire it, especially when they are able to see the front garden.

The original scheme had front gardens able to be on view but with the HCC making 'minor amendments' to the planning scheme, the new fences almost totally block out the visitor's capacity to see the gardens.

Heritage is best 'enhanced, preserved and restored'!

\* Anthem for a Doomed Youth. Apologies to Wilfred Owen  
\*\* The Battery Point Progress Association is now the Battery Point and Sullivan Cove Association Inc.

Yours truly,

John White

The Honourable John White LLB, JP

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Vida Lahey  
Salamanca Place, Hobart 1922  
oil on canvas  
42cm x 39cm  
Reproduced courtesy of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

