PROJECT HOBART WATERFRONT
An Exhibition of Work
from the Urban Design Studio
Master of Urban Design Program

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At the heart of the Hobart Waterfront Urban Design Framework are four "strategic axes". The idea is to improve connections across the Cove and between the waterfront and the city, especially in the vicinity of Victoria and Constitution Docks.

Two of these four axes are already reasonably well formed: Murray and Elizabeth Streets. One is much used but it is cluttered, somewhat unsafe and difficult to "read" but has phenomenal potential - the FRANKLIN WHARF AXIS. One (reaching from Collins Street and incorporating City Hall, Dunn Place and the area between the two docks) is barely apparent - the CITY HALL AXIS.

Four studio groups were asked to explore ideas for these two axes in need of most attention and with the most potential to benefit the Waterfront and the City.

FRANKLIN WHARF

This axis is the main link across the Cove between Salamanca Place, Hunter Street and beyond. Its revitalisation is critical to the success of the waterfront.

At present it is a highly fragmented route which is full of obstacles for pedestrians, and where activity is discontinuous. It is essential that a continuous, clear and uninterrupted walking path is established, including the possibility of a crossing over Watermans Dock. This path will follow the wharf edge and link with public car parks at both ends.

The walkway will be the key element in the improvement of the wharf as a public space. Improvement will involve un-cluttering and simplifying the wharf area, and organizing the walkway, associated public facilities (eg shelter, kiosks, signs, toilets and telephones) and parking in a coherent pattern.


CITY HALL AXIS

The City Hall Axis is central to any vision for the Cove that regards its role and image as ‘home’ to an outstanding concentration of cultural activities and community events. Transformed several times through very significant changes in landscape, street pattern, buildings, and uses, its history is rich and varied. Today, it again offers opportunity for substantial change. It is along this broad band of space that an exciting new layer may be added that is both embedded in its past yet thoroughly contemporary – and a pointer to the future.

Having experienced several phases of significant change, the area of the axis is historically important. Before European settlement, it was the place where a stream flowed into the Cove and was of importance in Aboriginal life. Because Sullivan Cove and the Hobart Fleet together offered safe anchorage and fresh water, the area was subsequently key to European settlement and Hobart’s foundation as a colonial capital. Here, in early Hobart Town, the space and waters of the Cove reached back to Macquarie Street to displace a corner from the city grid, which is now occupied by Dunn Place. Dunn Place can now claim to lie ambiguously as part of the space of the Cove and as part of a block within the city’s street grid.

The exploration was to consider:

- The opportunity for a major cultural focus with new arts, community and commercial facilities through the development of buildings and public spaces along the axis.
- The need for City Hall to change, with new activities along its street edges, and preferably cross-links through the building, if Market Place and Campbell Street are to become truly successful as components of the axis.
- Making the crossings at Macquarie and Davey Streets broader and more pedestrian-friendly.

It was also to demonstrate:

- A thorough understanding and (more important) convincing interpretation of the evolution of the land and built forms on and around the axis as a crucial element to any future design.


The 17 postgraduates who took part in this studio are all studying in the Master of Urban Design program at the University of Sydney and have previous qualifications in architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, engineering or art. The four carefully considered concepts reflect substantially (though not entirely) the Hobart Waterfront Urban Design Framework. This exploratory work shows a range of approaches and design possibilities. It is intended to stimulate and inform further discussion about the future of a very special place.

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