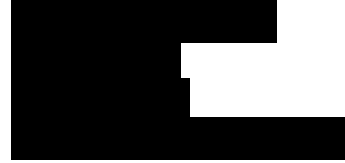


28 July 2023



Future of Local Government Review  
GPO Box 123  
Hobart  
Tasmania 7001

To the Secretary of the Review Board,

I am a resident within the Southern Midlands Municipality and agree with the Submission made by our Council.

However I wish to take this opportunity to expand on the thinking I used, over and beyond the terms set out in the Council submission. My thinking was prompted in part by Professor Rufus Black's opinion statement as published in the Mercury, March 22, 2023, in which he suggested in an article entitled *Our future is our choice* that we, Tasmanians, could choose to become a Lighthouse for the World if we put our minds towards grappling with the wider issues of planning to live sustainably on our planet.

I agree with the Professor's opinion. The task, for all of us, is to start to work together. This then led to the obvious observation that the *Future of Local Government Review* has come about through members of State Government seeing themselves as separate too, more capable than, and more rational than those living in the various municipal areas managed by Local Councils across Tasmania. This I do not believe is true, especially when it comes to the challenge for all of us to cooperate and re-organize our daily living patterns to be in tune with the 'operating instructions' for the planet. This should be the obvious underlying reasoning that led to this review.

However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that everyone of us are currently living in ways that are way out of tune with the life sustaining systems that created the conditions that supported the creation of all life as we know it.

Take a look at the graphs shown on the pages entitled 'The Great Acceleration' in the book *The Science of our Changing Planet* by Tony Juniper, or consider the suggestions 'What you can do now' in the book *The Future We Choose* by Christian a Figueres and Tom Rivett- Carnac, or just follow the daily news bulletins from around the World.

Clearly the systems/rules that run our Earth are not going to change to suit us. They can, however, be stuffed up by us in so many ways as to no longer support the conditions that hitherto have suited an ever evolving pattern of the many living forms of life that is our honour to be part of. So it has to be all of us that need to change. To do this we need to learn to

understand and support all life systems. This means working with one another in ways we have not done to date. This means re thinking the way we organize ourselves by first recognizing that everyone needs to be involved in the processes required to re think our relationship to the greater system that operates Earth. Most of this system can be understood in terms of scientific principles; and science has a lot to say about how we might do this. Listen to *A century of healing* – Ockhams Razor - ABC Radio National for a conversation between Robyn Williams and Steb Fisher to get an account of what needs to happen.

As previously stated in this submission - This means re thinking the way we organize ourselves by first recognizing that everyone needs to be involved in the processes required to re think our relationship to the greater system that operates Earth.

This in turn means that we need to rethink the current relationship between groups of people in society. In my opinion the *Future of Local Government Review* should also include discussion about the current relationship between Members of the State Government and The Local Government Board as it seems to me that the job of those we have elected to lead us is not to make decisions, but rather to guide the process and act as a guardian of the principles of transparency and fairness by allowing the general community to make the decisions. Let us live by the terms outlined in the *Earth Charter* as available for download on the internet.

In other words I think ideally our elected officials should serve rather than dictate.

Why think like this? Is it practical? Does it make sense to reset the bars when we know the bars are likely to be reset for all of us in days ahead? I think yes. So here is a little explanation as to why I think this way. I think this background is important because other members of my immediate community will have equally full backgrounds and will be using what they learnt along the way to engage in the Future of Local Government Review. This is a richness of experience that is too easily overlooked by simplifying matters down to a few economic equations and management processes. Imagine if we also drag in the needs of the natural environment. No, I will persevere with providing the Review Board with a full account of why I think we all need to think.

So to answer the question “why think like this” I feel I need to go back a long way as I think it is to do with me developing, early in my life, a sense of uncertainty and a fear of failure. Consequently I developed a way of doing things that responded to a general aim contained in the idea ‘whatever the circumstances it is important to work out some plan that has a chance of securing a reasonable and safe outcome’. I think this idea came from early experiences of decisions taken by my parents coupled with many discussions with my interesting siblings.

I was born in 1940 to medical missionaries in South China. Both parents worked in a hospital not far inland from Amoy (now Xiamen) on the south coast. The Second World War was underway and Japan had invaded China and moved south. Singapore was taken in 1942.

By 1944 the family had increased by two. I had a brother and baby sister. The Japanese were located on the coast of China. My parents had decided to retreat back across China, over the Himalaya Mountains, across India by train to catch a boat back to England via the Suez Canal and the then disputed territory of the Mediterranean Sea and back to our Grandparents in Ramsgate, Kent.

This year was marked by a number of uncertain experiences including becoming aware that adults could be frightened. Even though these were early days in our development there was continuous chatter between me and my brother about what was happening. However we were always assured by our parents that it would work out. They seemed to have the knack of seeing through dark days and always talk about things that 'would' happen.

1945 - 46. World War Two finished. My parents, with their three children, returned 'home' to the hospital and house in China where we were welcomed by the same family that had served us since my parents had started working, years before, in the hospital just over the compound brick boundary wall. This family had grown in parallel to ours. We kids were delighted to meet up with the kids we had grown up with and be reunited with their grandmother, our treasured toys, and those special, remembered, places both in the compound surrounding the house and beyond to the surrounding grave yard, rice paddy fields, irrigation ponds, islands with temples, wells, big fig trees with forests of aerial roots, and the village beyond.

Life was settled. Home schooling was not so good. It was hard to learn a language which was different from that we learned playing with our Chinese brothers and sisters or talking with their parents and grandmother. Stories of Normans invading England in 1066 made little sense while we played out in the paddy fields. Trips to the local village were marred by stones being thrown at us 'small white people with blond curly hair'. The saving grace was we had a tin of coloured pencils and I, my brother and sister spent time learning to draw between playing, chatting, and learning to argue with everyone including our Chinese brothers and sisters. My mother, who painted a bit, taught us to see and draw "in the round". The only cloud in the sky was being told that there would come a day when we would leave our home and return to England, remembered as a cold dark place, and go to a 'proper' school.

By 1949 another sister had joined our family and another baby was due the following year. It was yet another year of war. Mao was victorious in the civil war. Chiang Kai-shek fled to Formosa (Taiwan). There were big guns, wounded people at the hospital gates, tired and dirty soldiers resting in the home compound, strange dialects, bombs dropped from howling engines in the sky, and, at times, hiding in the half light under the stair in the nurses' home, real fear. After the troops had moved through the district there were new rules applied to the Chinese family, little food, and disturbing interruptions to daily life involving young Chinese people displaced by the war coming to beg and steal in order to survive. The liberation forces were not kind to them.

In 1950 my parents decided it was time to move. This time they decided to try to catch a boat to Hong Kong from Amoy. While we waited we stayed in a house on Gulangyu. The house is

located high up on the small island of Gulangyu and looked out over the harbor to the city of Xiamen (previously known as Amoy). Gulangyu was where the family holidayed each year and it was also where I was born and lived as a baby 10 years earlier. Gulangyu is a beautiful place. The island is known as 'The garden on the sea' and is blessed with a multitude of grand houses left over from the colonial times. We had learnt to swim from the beaches below our house. My youngest brother had been born just days before we arrived back to the island. He was now with us, a small baby, waiting for a boat to take us away from all we really knew. Again, this meant many of our treasured toys, books, friends, and drawings were to be left behind. The boats my parents hoped to catch were involved with continuing to support world trade with south China against the wishes of the Chiang Kai-shek government now established on Taiwan (then known as Formosa). Each day would be marked by the sound of shells and bombs involved in this struggle. The boats would come in secret after dark to unload and load at night to return to sea and be well away from the islands of Taiwan before dawn. These were tense times in which I think I began to grasp the idea 'whatever the circumstances it is important to work out some plan that has a chance of securing a reasonable and safe outcome.' I learnt this from my parents. I spent time with my father as he pleaded for news of a boat and captain that might respond to a fist full of money to take us away. There can only be a general plan. What happens is what happens. We control little.

The motivation for dealing with this fear and uncertainty did not cease when our family finally arrived back in England. I now learned my parents were well-respected and 'educated' people who clearly expected all their children to walk in their shadows. I soon found myself alone in an English boarding school without understanding why. This was made worse by having little experience of formal schooling. The school was Eltham College, a school for the sons of missionaries.

I soon learnt, painfully in more ways than one, that I had serious shortcomings in the ability to read and write English or to follow the logic of a maths lesson. As for being introduced to the French language: this was best forgotten. The major problem lay in trying to understand why I was separated from the family. I became the target of other boys who enjoyed deriding me when I cried for what I had lost. They had no idea. Actually, over time I learnt many of them could tell similar stories except they had been separated from their families as seven year olds and had developed the necessary skills and abilities of becoming skillful bullies at Prep School. At the time skillful bullies seemed to be no help. It is difficult to put aside a sense fear, uncertainty and loss when faced with them. These were dark times. What was to save me was I could draw, chat, argue and swim with the best of them. I had begun to think of ways out and away from what I was now beginning to perceive as a dreadful country full of people locked in ways not conducive to living. Thick choking fogs on dark very cold nights.

Looking back, the boarding school had one saving event each week. We all met in the school chapel on Sunday nights to listen to talks given by missionaries. I found their message of serving others useful. Many were like my parents, not so wrapped in religion, but totally dedicated to serving others. They represented many skills and knowledge areas. Some were teachers, others medical people, others administrators, builders and so on. Their message was to serve. They

talked of different mission fields throughout the world. I thought they were useful leaders. Their overall message to a young uncertain person presented a challenge to be considered. Do not be afraid to try something different.

I had no option but to spend many years building an image of myself to line up with what I thought others might judge as acceptable. An image I could present to the outside world based on my own limited knowledge of the culture in which I found myself. I carefully avoided anything that might tarnish or cripple this fragile 'image'. Much of the 'image' hung around my ability to paint and play games. I disliked competitive sports but hung in there in order to be known. I took an interest in how the school worked and slowly accepted various leadership roles. I learnt there is a strong relationship between power, the configuration of buildings powerful people cherished and the way people engage with one another. I started painting these relationships in diagrammatic forms.

So by the time it came to being let out of boarding school I had cultivated a basically presentable and acceptable person built on very shaky academic foundations who needed to find a suitable path ahead. A fear of failure still lurked as a driving force. On the surface all looked fine. Inside I was an unstable, tentative and at times irrational person who found the English life fairly unpleasant. They were scary times. The Cold War dominated many minds in the late 1950s. What to do next?

For a short time I hit upon the idea of being a deck officer on oil tankers. I was not interested in fighting. The merchant navy, I figured, would give me a smart uniform, a pay packet, and I could get away from England to spend time drawing and sketching my thoughts in response to reading about the world as I sailed around it. I found many people in England a little threatening by holding fixed ideas. The thought that there was still much to learn did not seem to enter the equation.

My father was not happy with the idea of paying for me to enter a merchant navy college. The family had always been short of money. He also thought I should consider using what skills I did have and talked me into the idea of considering marine architecture. This idea I soon dismissed when I found the engineering component of marine architecture required a huge knowledge of all those subjects I learnt at school were to be avoided like the plague. Fear always drives one to finding the path of least resistance. So I ended up with 'architecture' as the word to use when faced with the question, "Well sonny, what will you do in life?" I did not have a clue as to what I was really talking about.

However I did find I could sort of fit it around the activities of drawing and sketching my thoughts in response to reading about the world. The 'design profession' seemed to offer some room for continuing to build an image without the need of testing oneself in deep ponds of academic endeavour. I decided the 'design profession' was good. I could work with that. So I embarked on a course of Architecture at the Brighton College of Art and Craft. I was heartened by the discovery that the practice of Architecture did not require much in the way of knowledge or academic ability. A little note taking for end of year examination mixed with three

dimensional thinking and drawing skills would provide moments where positive relationships could be built on 'sparkling solutions' which would shield you from the real issues facing people in the outside world. So I embraced the world of architecture.

Fear gave way to long chats over countless beers with fellow students who shared ideas of drawing and sketching thoughts in response to reading about the world. After three years I decided I needed to find out what was actually happening out there. I left the College to find out.

The 'image' I now presented to others, in order to secure a job, was of a person who could convince anybody that by drawing everything from how a door handle works to reshaping city centres based on ideas gleaned from a book about Le Corbusier they would find I was indispensable to their business. I landed a job in London doing just that.

Work in the London office largely revolved around city centres, all over the country, whose heart had been lost in the Blitz and were now to be revitalized by an injection of American speculative money which would prompt new commercial and business spaces in which people could parade during business hours in 50 pound tailored suits. I was good at this. There were no friends here. It was dog eat dog. It was post war English architecture as stipulated by those with the power to redirect investment moneys. It was very physical, robust, and had little to do with the real needs of the humans that had been ravaged by war and dictated to by ex-army Generals as they, in turn, set out to ravage the country. Exposed precast concrete was all the rage. It was all a little daunting but very three dimensional. I got a name for designing the formwork for giving concrete the desired shapes. Thinking inside out! I did not like what I found myself doing. I needed time to think.

I retreated back to College, got married and began to think a little deeper about all I found around me. I made a design decision not to 'draw' until I had a better feel for what to draw. These were relatively lonely days. Having dropped out of College to 'sparkle' for a year in London I had automatically become disengaged from those I had started my studies with. I found myself with new people who, on the whole, had not experienced the bounce and sparkle of redesigning city centres using coloured zip-a-tone at three in the morning. I began to think about giving people out there a chance to have their say in what should happen in terms of their built environment. The television soap operas and kitchen sink plays of the early 1960s reminded us all that there were people hurting in the 'New Towns.'

I began to think about how one might assist people to define their needs in terms of buildings and other social spaces. I wanted to be part of a solution rather than just another brick in the problem. We now call it the Briefing stage in an architectural project. The College was still teaching 'architectural design' based on students learning about the manipulation of form, shape and texture, mixed with some grounding knowledge of how this would be constructed. I wobbled my way along a line that acknowledged what was being taught but accepted that in the end it was more about learning to listen to others' needs.

My early effort at thinking about listening to what the client(s) might need was, in fact, my thesis on the subject of *Church in the 1970s*. I recently described my efforts in an article on the question of selling off Tasmanian churches to raise money in support of those ravaged by sexually out of control people in black robes. This is what I wrote:-

*Back in the 1960s I completed an architectural thesis at the Brighton College of Arts and Crafts in England titled the 'Church in the 1970s'. There were a number of reasons for picking this subject. The most pressing was that I wanted to work on something which was real and meant a lot to people in the wider community. The 2<sup>nd</sup> World War finished in 1945 but ration books were still being used well into the 1950s. I was at a boarding school in south east London during this time but became increasingly aware that huge efforts were being made all around to clear up the mess left as a result of the war. Every day community needs and concerns came first. People needed houses, hospital services, schools, clinics, markets, shops, banks, and even their 'local' rebuilt and open in the evening! Life needed not only to be restored but made better for all. Developing social, cultural, educational and recreational services for everyone was high on local government agendas.*

*The 1950s and into the 1960s saw great changes in England. Centres of cities, often heavily destroyed by bombs, were vacated by residents to make way for more profitable commercial and business activities. Big, often splendid church buildings were left empty while out in the New Towns, where people were now housed, these people were seeking a range of family and personal support.*

*Ideal territory for an architectural student who is interested in the relationship between people and a new 'working' environment they need to construct around themselves.*

*So I chose a small village about ten miles out of Brighton, which was rapidly changing into a 'dormitory town' for the workers needed in Brighton, as the canvas for my design thesis.*

*My research involved exploring ideas with a range of government agencies at national and local level, leaders of different denominations of churches, and other community support bodies and organizations including a range of commercial, legal, transport infrastructure and business services. The resultant design was more like a supermarket with consulting rooms. Lots of new and different services clipped on to what was once a small parish church, served by an occasional priest, with a small band of followers.*

*What was interesting: we all learnt a great deal about managing ourselves in an ever changing world. The thesis passed even though I was asked by one of the assessors only to explain the plan I had for heating it! It is tricky stuff learning to be an architect.*

Since writing my thesis I have always made a beeline for anything that smacks of the Briefing process. The drawing and physical design stuff was put aside in order to develop ways of 'listening' to the needs of others. Teaching at the College of Environmental Design became part of this process. In this environment I was well out of my depth. No sparkling three dimensional design drawings here. Lots of academic skills required. Fear of failing loomed large during these

days. Friends were many and varied. I sought out people who spoke about nearly everything other than architecture. People who looked at the world by reading contemporary evidence-based social writings and working with others to establish community acceptable plans. It was all very choppy and open. Being at sea was something I had craved while young. Now, I knew what being at sea actually meant. There were many new ports, new lands, and new ideas. Again the world became a frightening place. It is much too unstable for crafting a comfortable self image. In 1978 I left the College when it was taken over by the University of Tasmania.

After a few years I found myself back at an architect's drawing board casting around for a project that might need plenty of 'listening' before a line was drawn. I got a chance to listen to the people of Invermay and put their case for retaining some of the history of their Primary School in the proposed redevelopment project. The Education Department wanted to replace the old with a new building.

The way I was able to manage this project led directly to my being asked to ponder the process of helping approximately 1000 police personnel define what they required in terms of their proposed building which was to be considered in a relatively tight government financial program. A team was developed to answer the police needs.

I then managed a few other similar building projects for about 10 years. Soon after, the Department of Housing and Construction was closed.

The question for the Review is "Should all this be forgotten? Are there not a multitude of such stories hidden away in every Tasmanian home? How can the diversity of knowledge and abilities hidden in these homes be liberated to assist with grappling with the list of urgent tasks outlined in the back of the book *The Future We Choose* written by Chistiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac ?, or how can Tasmania become a Lighthouse for the World as proposed by Professor Rufus Black?

In my opinion these are urgent questions for our State leaders while they ponder such life changing questions as building a stadium under an increasingly warm sky. Listen to Robyn Williams and Julian Cribb discuss the issues under the heading *Solving humanity's greatest risk* on Radio National Sunday 4 June 2017.

Clearly there is a pressing need for us to work together as we have in fact always chosen to do. An anthropologist Christopher Boehm, who spent his career studying both primates and hunter-gatherer societies, presented a convincing account of how morality originated in early humans. At first, he reported, assertive males would try to achieve the kind of dominance seen in other primate societies. But the rest of the group – females and males collaborating – would be driven by shared moral outrage to prevent such males from disrupting the group harmony. Boehm called this 'reverse dominance hierarchy' because the group as a whole establishes dominance over aggressive individuals. Over time, through an evolutionary process of group selection, nomadic bands that emphasized group identity flourished, whereas those that ceded control to the dominant alpha male eventually failed.



I think the current situation requires the same need to work together. This description of Christopher Boehm's findings was taken from Jeremy Lent's book *THE WEB OF MEANING* in which Jeremy goes on to write;

*Eventually, people's sense of identity expanded from their own self and kin to include their entire group. The common welfare became a touchstone for values: those who acted selfishly at the expense of the group were considered bad, whereas those who acted altruistically were seen as good. In a gradual process of culture-gene co-evolution, those ethical distinctions became embedded in the genetic endowment of the bands that flourished, eventually becoming endemic to the human species. We don't just act morally because we think we should - we do so because it **feels** right.*

It is this feeling that motivated my desire to provide the Review Board with this long additional statement as I feel it is important that while making judgments about the future organization of our local communities thought is given to reviewing the whole system by which we are organized in this State (politics, economics, culture, religion, recreation, education, business, construction, industry, health, power generation, and so on) as there is little in common between the way humans are organized and the way Earth works.

For the sake of all living on our planet it is now urgently required that we work together.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission from a 82 year old citizen of Tasmania who is offering to assist with building a Lighthouse.

Chris Harman.