



North's cutting edge

MERCURY

IT is time Hobart made more of its river, not just the picture-postcard bits downstream of the Tasman Bridge but those wonderful stretches of water north of the city centre.

Fortunately designers and developers are beginning to overcome that traditional blind spot and look north for inspiration, beyond the endlessly scrutinised Sullivans Cove and Battery Point zone.

A combination of private and public projects is transforming the northern suburbs, reconnecting them with the river and turning the whole area into a tourist hotspot.

A \$2 million boardwalk over the water and along the foreshore at Elwick Bay is the latest in a series of carefully thought out, well-funded projects that combine good art, fine design and natural attractions.

The elegant, crescent-shaped boardwalk is a centrepiece of the Glenorchy Art and Sculpture Park and part of a 5km stretch of pedestrian and bicycle paths and regenerated wetlands linking the Derwent Entertainment Centre and the \$100 million Museum of Old and New Art taking shape at Moorilla Estate.

MONA, the largest private art gallery in Australia, should become one of Hobart's major attractions when it opens next year.

The building has been a work in progress for several years and not everyone is sold on the mysterious, vault-like design of the museum but it promises to change Hobart's image forever and the spin-offs should be significant.

Owner David Walsh is keen to make the most of Moorilla's wharf to develop ferry services connecting MONA with the city centre.

Hobart harbour cruises and tourism generally tends to focus on the lower

reaches of the river but there is no reason why ferry services should not make more use of the city's inland waterways, as they do in Brisbane and Sydney.

These are beautiful, safe cruising waters and Elwick Bay is one of the loveliest places on any part of the estuary. Anywhere else in the world it would be regarded as a rare beauty spot but here it tends to be glimpsed from the Brooker Highway and dismissed as being out there in the 'burbs.

It says a lot about local snobbery that so many people are dismissive of anything north of New Town Rivulet.

While residents of other state capitals have little trouble seeing their city as a complete urban area, Hobart tends to be riven by parochialism between the inner and northern suburbs, the Eastern Shore, Kingborough, Brighton and Sorell. The geography of the city, strung out along the River Derwent, with isolated pockets of suburban development around the fringes, conspires against a feeling of shared identity, as does the existence of six separate councils.

The emergence of major attractions, parks, bike and walking tracks and ferry routes in Glenorchy should help break down some of these barriers, encouraging tourists to find accommodation in the area and explore other local options, such as the wine route from Moorilla to Granton and beyond.

Glenorchy also is keen to offer an alternative base for the much-debated cable car up Mt Wellington if the Hobart City Council is not able to agree on a route. A Glenorchy cable car would have spectacular views and not be seen by the sensitive residents of central Hobart.

Hopefully, exciting developments north of the city can change attitudes among locals and visitors and give all Hobartians something to be proud of.