

SALON/SOUTH 2011

Twenty-First Century Ideas for Tasmania

//**CULTURE**

//**COMMUNITY**

//**CAPITAL**

About SALON/SOUTH

In 2011 the Inglis Clark Centre for Civil Society at the University of Tasmania ran the second SALON/SOUTH series – discussion salons exploring ideas and practical strategies for enhancing the economic, cultural and social vibrancy of Tasmania as we proceed through the twenty-first century. The first series was delivered in 2010. The subsequent report became a useful resource for Tasmanians, and others, working broadly in the space of thought leadership.

In 2011, again almost one hundred Tasmanian agenda setters across industry, government, academia and the community and philanthropic sectors participated in SALON/SOUTH. Some had been involved in the 2010 series, but most 2011 participants were new to these events, to expand the range of contributing viewpoints. SALON/SOUTH 2011 was delivered across Tasmania – CULTURE in Launceston, COMMUNITY in Burnie, and CAPITAL in Hobart. Core funding for this project came from the Inglis Clark Centre, with generous partnership support from New Ground, Clockwork Beehive, Moorilla and Chartley Estate. Salon participants all donated their time on a pro bono basis.

Each salon ran for around three hours in the evening. The sessions featured expert speakers from outside Tasmania, whose role was to lead discussion and stretch local thinking on the issues addressed. In 2011 these guest participants were Professor Marcia Langton, Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, and member of the Prime Minister's Expert Panel for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians (CULTURE); Associate Professor Cheryl Kernot, Director of Social Business at the Centre for Social Impact at the University of New South Wales and former Federal parliamentarian (COMMUNITY); and Ms Narelle Hooper, finance journalist and Editor of *AFR BOSS* magazine (CAPITAL). Each salon was curated and facilitated by the Director of the Inglis Clark Centre.

Sessions were run according to the Chatham House Rule, to encourage more frank and open debate. This ensured the participation of key political operatives, industry and community leaders and senior bureaucrats – and the expression of opinion and disagreement that would not necessarily occur constructively in more public and exposed contexts.

This report is my summary of the discussion and recommendations of each salon. It also includes commissioned 'think/do' pieces from a selection of salon participants.

I welcome feedback and enquiries about *SALON/SOUTH 2011 – Twenty-First Century Ideas for Tasmania*, which is available online from the Inglis Clark Centre.

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COLLABORATIVE + CREATIVE INVESTMENT = THE NEXT GENERATION OF TASMANIAN BUSINESS PRACTICE

**– Peta Heffernan, Director,
Liminal Studio**

Tasmania is intimate, boutique and emotive. Its natural environment, the built scale of its urban centres and its liveability has always attracted artists. Along with the period of economic growth prior to the recent downturn, this has opened the door to a new influx of creative professionals and entrepreneurs who want to invest in and be inspired by the uniqueness of Tasmania. We have also seen a critical mass of expatriate Tasmanian creatives returning home, bringing with them the benefits of interstate and international experience.

Liminal Studio – www.liminalstudio.com.au – is part of this next generation of Tasmanian creative practice. Its formation is the direct result of architectural and graphic design practitioners drawing on experience and networks we have established across Australia, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and integrating our formal disciplines with art, objects, writing, performance and strategy. Trans-disciplinary, cross-boundary exchange is central to our approach. We have invested in establishing a practice that operates as a kind of in-house 'think tank', which means our clients are the end beneficiaries of ideas-based design, resulting from a fresh pooling of distinctive perspectives.

Flagship projects have included the new Ogilvie High School Learning Centre, which received the highest honours for Public Architecture in the 2011 Australian Institute of Architects Awards (Tasmanian Chapter), a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable facility resulting from our consultative and collaborative engagement with the school community and heritage authorities. Another key commission was the Hobart CBD office fitout of new Tasmanian Labor Senator Lisa Singh, a brief that was infused with translating her party's

'Light on the Hill' legacy into the interior design, graphics, furniture and finishes of this contemporary working space. A more recent Liminal project has been the collaboration with Tasmanian composer Constantine Koukias of IHOS Music Theatre & Opera to develop *The Barbarians*. This remarkable and immersive opera was commissioned for the 2012 MONA FOMA (MOFO) season. MOFO's biggest commission to date, it was recently profiled in *The Weekend Australian*.

We choose to operate out of Tasmania and employ Tasmanians. For Tasmania to maintain social buoyance and attain longterm economic stability, it needs to attract and offer basic encouragement to those who make this kind of investment and commitment. It is a frustration and a disincentive to that investment and commitment, to witness Tasmanian government departments and agencies favour offshore architects, urban designers, event managers, strategic planners, graphic designers, advertising agencies, lawyers and others to deliver publicly funded professional services. Government has an obligation to spend taxpayers' dollars responsibly, including to maximise longer-term as well as short-term returns on that investment. At a time of economic downturn in Tasmania, each of those dollars counts even more – and the priority should be on spending that builds capacity within Tasmania.

It makes sense to source expertise from outside Tasmania where there is a lack of local and competitive talent. In today's Tasmania, however, that is more rarely the case than ever before. To assume otherwise reveals a timelag in mindset – a cultural (even colonialist) cringe that should have seen its day. It also overlooks that necessity is the parent of invention, which means practitioners embedded in the commercial realities of the small Tasmanian market develop a honed ability to make a little go a long way. Government gatekeepers may respond that every contract with an offshore firm or practice involves a Tasmanian partnership. But in our view 'partnerships' are being defined too loosely, to include simply using a local firm's office space for fly in/fly out visits by offshore practitioners, which amounts to partnership in name only.



The creative talent that chooses Tasmania as its home punches well above its weight – deploying innovative and context-specific process and delivering outcomes that bring a clear multiple-bottom-line benefit to this State. Given more recognition, encouragement and opportunity within the boundaries of our island, this segment of our population will expand and thrive.