



# MEDIA MONITORS

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**LEIGH DREW (1300) 16/11/98**

**SUBJECT:**

**ST KILDA ESPLANADE HOTEL**

**INTERVIEW:**

**DICK GROSS, PORT PHILLIP MAYOR**

*Mayor  
Gross  
CEO  
V Krastins  
C Shute  
D Spokes  
A Muszak  
G Oulton  
G Holdsworth  
Steve Dunn  
Sue Woods*

**COMPERE (Leigh Drew):** There was a protest rally yesterday of some thousand people I believe down at St Kilda, about the Espy Hotel. They're protesting because they, they don't want a 38 storey tower on the site. The Port Phillip Mayor Dick Gross said today that the impressive rally outside the Espy Hotel showed the depth of community concern about plans to build that tower on the site.

And the Mayor is on the line. Dick, a very good afternoon to you, thanks for taking our call.

**DICK GROSS (St Kilda Mayor):** No worries Leigh, how are you going?

**COMPERE:** I'm very, very well thanks. What the council view at this stage, Dick?

**GROSS:** Well the council's view is very enigmatic, because we're in a position where we have to make a decision, and it's, this decision is at a long process which I won't go into

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because it's long and arduous, but it's perhaps too early in the process for the council to make a decision.

What we've seen is most of the information, but not all of it. The applicant has, Becton Corporation has made an application, and we're obviously aware of that.

COMPERE: Now they acquired this site I believe, back in September.

GROSS: That's right, of last year.

COMPERE: Now, they will leave the hotel where it is, and just develop a tower at the back, is that correct?

GROSS: That's right, but they will, they do intend to take off some bits of the east wing, so there are a number of issues involved, you know, this is a 38 storey tower, there's going to be demolition of the east wing of the Espy, plus and adjacent building called Baymore Flats, which is sort of like an older style Spanish Mission, and of course then there's all the other planning considerations about traffic and overshadowing and overlooking to deal with the whole proposal. So it's a pretty complex box and dice to assess, and...

COMPERE: Is the council generally, is the council generally happy that it would go ahead, but in review, in a revised plan?

GROSS: Well as I say, I hate to be enigmatic and not give the game away, but it's still pretty early

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in the process. We haven't got all of the, all of the objections in from the public.

That time for objection closes on the 20th of November. Now clearly, the vast weight of public concern is about the height of the tower, and it's almost an unprecedented level of objection, it's huge, and clearly the council can't ignore that.

COMPERE:

Well what are the constraints in the area with height for buildings?

GROSS:

Okay, well, we've got some height controls, in our planning scheme, but you can change the height controls by applying for what's called a planning scheme amendment, and that's what's happened here, that a planning scheme amendment application has been made, and so Becton are saying to us, Dear Council, you've got some height controls, please will you waive them for this particular application because we think it's worthy of a high landmark building.

At the same time our height controls have been under some scrutiny, and a state government panel has said that we don't like your, the way your height controls are framed and we want you to get new ones by the end of this year.

Now, we've just commissioned and trying to implement new height controls, so it's like a very volatile time for this application to be made, and so I'm being quite careful about the way I frame council's views.

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Now having said that, Council has said that this, whilst we haven't made a final determination as yet on this proposal, we have said that some of our coastal and height policies, and current height controls are breached by this application, so we haven't sort of said nothing, but we haven't, whilst we haven't said anything about the ultimate outcome of the decision, we have said that as a matter of fact, it is possible to observe that some of our heritage policies...

COMPERE: Well from what you are saying...

GROSS: ... foreshore policies and other policies aren't taken into account by this application.

COMPERE: Dick, from what you're saying there, the council's in a very difficult position, you've got 1000 protesters who obviously don't want it to go ahead, and you're in a very, very tender environment. Would you pass over the decision making then to perhaps a state government appointed authority, or a private independent?

GROSS: Right, can... well, I suppose I'd have to say over my dead corpse. I'm really concerned that this council maintains it's control over this decision. Now, I said that this was a process, and it is a process.

It goes like this: somebody wants a planning scheme amendment, they put in an application, and then we hear from people at the time they put it in, then it goes on exhibition and we hear from people again, and then it goes from there to an

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expert panel, and we hear from people at panel and in written submissions to the panel, and all sorts of ways.

And then it comes back again and the council makes a final recommendation, and ultimately it ends up on the desk of the Minister of Planning Robert Maclellan. So it's a long process, and in that, all the way along the process, people get to have their two bob's worth, so I'm determined that this council should have its say on the matter. Yes it is difficult, and yes it is not going to be an easy process to manage, but that's our job, and...

COMPERE: In having those views, though...

GROSS: ... and that the process will ensure that everyone gets a fair go.

COMPERE: Dick in those views, of course, that you're talking about with the council, those views will obviously put forward the thoughts and the concerns, then, of your electorate?

GROSS: Oh absolutely, and there's no way you can ignore it.

COMPERE: No, it's been very strong.

GROSS: I went to the rally yesterday, and there were about, you know, 1000 screaming people who were letting us know in very stark terms what they wanted from council in this decision.

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COMPERE: Okay, let's see what happens on Friday then, because you say that's when everything closes off on Friday with the objections, and I dare say you'll have a very, you know, well, close knit battle going on I suppose between you and Becton as the times close.

Mayor, thank you for talking to us today.

GROSS: No worries.

COMPERE: Okay bye, bye to you. That's the Mayor councillor Dick Gross talking to us from Port Phillip.

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