

# Catalyst for Change?

## R.A. McInnis and town planning in Launceston 1945 to 1956

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Between 1945 and 1956 R. A. McInnis served as Tasmania's first Town and Country Planning Commissioner and was charged with the responsibility of winning acceptance for the Town and Country Planning Act 1944, the first major piece of planning legislation in Tasmania. During his period as Commissioner McInnis faced many obstacles and challenges and did not always achieve his objectives, but he was pivotal to the successful implementation of town and country planning in Tasmania. Previous work on McInnis has provided an overview of his work, but this paper will analyse how influential McInnis was in stimulating town planning in Launceston, Tasmania's second largest city. Town planning enthusiasts in Launceston had been pressing the virtues of town planning since 1915, but without much success because of a lack of effective legislation and of town planning expertise. The context changed with the passage of the 1944 Act and McInnis' appointment. Although strains and tensions were evident in McInnis' relations with the Launceston City Council, aldermen and city officials came to rely on his experience and judgement before following through on town planning proposals. On some issues such as extending city boundaries and furthering regional planning McInnis was a valuable ally of the City Council in its relations with the surrounding municipalities that cramped the growth of Launceston. McInnis also assigned his staff, especially Dutch-trained Hans Westerman, to assist with a zoning plan for the city and a regional master plan. McInnis expended considerable energy selling the advantages of town planning to community and business groups and was assisted by visits from English experts such as Patrick Abercrombie and William Holford. The paper concludes that McInnis was an indispensable catalyst for change in Launceston and turned town planning from an unattainable ideal into a practical reality.

**Keywords:** Town planning legislation, regional planning, zoning scheme, R.A. McInnis, Launceston

## Introduction

A characteristic of Australian planning history over the last three decades has been the focus on individual planners. Pioneers like John Sulman, Walter Burley Griffin, and Charles Reade and later many lesser lights have attracted scholarly attention and provided insights into the reception of town planning in twentieth-century Australia. One problem of a biographical approach to planning is the tendency towards hagiography, which Krueckeberg describes as “empathy overdone, overwhelmingly”.<sup>1</sup> He argues that biographies of planners should not provide role models, create heroes or kowtow to genius, but show how individuals shaped the communities that they were a part of and show planning not in abstract terms but in “human terms”. At their best, planning biographies can “reveal the myths” and virtues of the profession: “the wildest hopes, the darkest fears, the sweetest dreams, the worst offenses, the dullest foolishness”.<sup>2</sup> We might also add another point, which is the gap between aspiration and reality as planners try to persuade a myriad of interests groups that their vision for a better urban future is one worth supporting. The most useful kind of biography of a planner analyses the extent to which an individual planner’s aims were translated into action or not as the case may be. The key question must therefore be was a planner a catalyst for change in his city or region or did the status quo of immovable intellectual, social or political forces triumph?

This paper seeks to answer this question by examining the work of Ronald McInnis (1890-1982) during his period as Town and Country Planning Commissioner in Tasmania between 1945 and 1956. Arriving in Tasmania fortified by extensive experience in Queensland and Darwin, McInnis had the difficult task of persuading a largely apathetic community and hostile or indifferent municipal councils in particular that town planning was not a theoretical desideratum but a practical economic and social imperative in the post-war world. Tirelessly travelling around Tasmania and talking to municipal councils and citizens groups, McInnis spread the gospel of planning and the need for united action. As the Town and Country Planning Commissioner, the most knowledgeable and experienced professional in the State, he injected a new dynamism and gravitas into debates about the value of planning. McInnis worked with a small staff, but his task was greatly aided by the appointment of Hans Westerman, a twenty-six year old Dutchman who trained as a civil engineer at the Technological University of Delft and had planning experience.<sup>3</sup> Beginning work with McInnis in March 1952, Westerman rose to become Assistant Town and Country Planning Commissioner in 1957 after acting in the position for nearly two years, helped prepare a number of local planning schemes, including one in Launceston, and wrote a number of comprehensive reports extolling the virtues of long-term planning. This paper will focus on the extent to which McInnis was able to persuade the Launceston City Council to begin and continue planning and to foster greater co-operation with the surrounding municipalities in the Tamar region.

McInnis’ major task was to advise municipalities on how to produce town-planning schemes. He saw himself as a missionary, enlightening the municipal savages, but many Councils were unwilling to take advice from a Hobart-based Commissioner.<sup>4</sup> McInnis remained undaunted and repeatedly urged them to prepare detailed surveys of their towns, which would be the basis of planning and assist in building water and sewerage services. It was in the interest of the two largest and fastest growing councils of Hobart and Launceston to adopt planning schemes. McInnis tried especially hard to establish good relations with those councils and acted as a link between the councils and the

State and Federal Governments to ensure all levels of government worked together rather than in opposition when making plans for city growth.

A major feature of McInnis' tenure as Commissioner was the debate over the merits of co-operative and regional planning, which the State and Federal governments favoured in their quest for postwar reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> In Britain, for "a brief period in the 1940s, regional planning assumed an intellectual dominance in the town planning movement" and this was also largely true of Australia.<sup>6</sup> Encouraging co-operation between the Launceston City Council and adjoining municipalities would be a difficult assignment because the latter were wary of Launceston taking over areas that they had developed. Working in his usual diplomatic way, McInnis achieved some notable advances, with the formation of the Tamar Valley Planning Committee in 1952 and the Northern Metropolitan Planning Committee in 1955. The chances of co-operative planning in Launceston were extremely slim when McInnis was first appointed, but on his retirement most Councils accepted that co-operation was necessary.

### **The Context for Post-War Planning in Launceston**

In mainland Australia town and country planning received endorsement from Federal and State governments intent on reconstructing society in the post-war period.<sup>7</sup> Australian cities would be improved by removing slums, providing more parks and open spaces, building more housing and freeways, controlling subdivisions and development and introducing zoning schemes. Based on British town and country legislation, new planning laws were passed by Victoria in 1944 and New South Wales in 1945 giving municipal councils greater responsibility for planning with some co-ordination at the State level. In practice most councils lacked the resources and often the will to implement comprehensive planning and relied on discretionary interim development controls to guide city growth into the 1960s. Although master plans were completed for Sydney in 1948, Melbourne in 1954 and Perth in 1955, they were "top-down documents, largely concerned with issues of facilitating development efficiently in the interests of the ruling hegemony of land-related interests" and at best marginalized "public participation".<sup>8</sup>

These developments were largely mirrored in Tasmania. During the Second World War a consensus emerged in Tasmania about the need for town and country planning after 1945.<sup>9</sup> The main drivers of this consensus was the need to improve living conditions for Tasmanians and to take advantage of the rapid economic development, which was expected to flow from cheap hydro-electric power and an influx of migrants to run new industries. In 1943 Premier Robert Cosgrove predicted that Tasmania would experience its most rapid industrial development after the war and that, as companies would need land, they must plan for future requirements before the war ended.<sup>10</sup> In addition to industrial development, hectic house building and the paramountcy of building roads to cope with the increasing use of cars strengthened the argument for town planning measures.<sup>11</sup>

In 1943 the Cosgrove Labor Government drafted a Town and Country Planning Bill, which was submitted to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament to seek knowledgeable and interested comment on its provisions.<sup>12</sup> What emerged in 1944 was Tasmania's first major planning statute, the Town and Country Planning Act, gazetted to be operational in 1945. Based on the English Town and Country Planning Act 1932, the Tasmanian legislation strengthened local government responsibility for planning. Councils were required to submit a town-planning scheme to the newly-appointed

Town and Country Planning Commissioner. Once provisionally approved, the scheme remained open for public inspection and objection for three months.

The person chosen to be the Town and Country Planning Commissioner would be crucial to the success of the new legislation and the Cosgrove Government chose wisely by appointing Ronald Alison McInnis. McInnis was born in Queensland in 1890 and trained as a surveyor, but in the 1920s became increasingly interested in town planning.<sup>13</sup> He made notable contributions to town planning in Noosa, Mackay, where he produced the first town plan in Queensland for an existing city, and Brisbane, where in April 1938 he was appointed city planner and developed a zoning scheme for the city. In 1940 he prepared a plan for Darwin, but the bombing of the city in February 1942 prevented its implementation. While cognizant of planning developments in New Zealand, France, and Germany, he was most heavily influenced by English and American approaches to planning.<sup>14</sup> In the 1930s he quoted liberally from the writings of leading town planners such as the American John Nolen and the Englishmen Raymond Unwin and Thomas Adams. For McInnis town planning had two major objectives. One was to attain the “coordinated control of development by the representatives of the people for the community as a whole”.<sup>15</sup> The other related objective was to provide everyone with “healthy, convenient, and pleasant living and working conditions”.<sup>16</sup> Homes should be built in “pleasant surroundings” with provision for recreational areas. Children should have access to playgrounds and adults access to playing fields, bowling greens, tennis courts, and “all other facilities that varying tastes require for the hours of recreation”. Planning would ensure that workers did not have to travel too far to their workplaces or to parks and rural areas. Modern town planning was primarily concerned with improving the pleasure and comfort of the working classes.<sup>17</sup> Aesthetic considerations remained an integral part of modern planning but it now put “the common good in the place of the individual good”, positive social benefits in place of selfish private interests.

McInnis was not naive enough to imagine that planners could win converts simply by asserting the benefits of their schemes. A town planner had to be above all a salesman, “selling ideas which induce action”.<sup>18</sup> McInnis admitted to being obsessed with the idea of the planner as salesman and thought “there would be much more progress in planning if more planners had the same obsession”. To be a successful salesman a planner must first “be convinced that he has something that every local authority needs” and that every community will find “beneficial”. A planner was not a salesman who relied on “smart talk to make a quick sale, and then passes on to the next conquest”. A planner must “know and be able to show that his plan can be made to work”. One way of doing this was to point to the advantages planning had wrought elsewhere. The salesmanship did not end when the local authority agreed to adopt a plan or when the planner had received his instructions from the council.<sup>19</sup> He should be available to advise the councillors and to shepherd them through to the completion of their scheme.

After falling out with the Brisbane City Council and city architect over their lack of support for his zoning scheme, McInnis accepted the new position of Town and Country Planning Commissioner for Tasmania in 1944 and began work in February 1945. The Minister for Lands and Works Edward Brooker made it clear that McInnis was appointed not to prepare plans for municipalities, but to advise on “how such plans should be prepared and by whom”.<sup>20</sup> He would approve plans by local bodies, co-ordinate plans and resolve any disputes that emerged between planning bodies and anyone affected by their plans. McInnis assured local bodies that “they need not fear undue

interference from him” and that he would feel a failure if he ever used his limited powers of “compulsion”.<sup>21</sup> McInnis realized that Tasmanian municipal councils lacked the resources to appoint trained planners and formed a panel of experienced town planners from other Australian States to offer their services on technical matters, but it is unclear that their services were used.<sup>22</sup>

Tasmania’s capital Hobart had already shown interest in town planning in 1943 when the City Council appointed Victorian planner F.C. Cook to draft a city plan, but, when Cook’s report received negative responses, the City Council did not proceed with it.<sup>23</sup> McInnis failed to persuade the City Council to prepare a town-planning scheme under the 1944 Act. In his quest for co-operative planning in the Greater Hobart area, McInnis managed to secure the creation of the Hobart Metropolitan Planning Committee in 1951 and it produced some valuable reports thanks to research carried out by McInnis’ staff, especially Hans Westerman, who produced some valuable reports, but no metropolitan plan was completed. The committee was succeeded by the Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority in 1958, another example of co-operative planning in the 1950s.

By 1945 Launceston, Tasmania’s second largest city and a commercial centre for northern Tasmania, had been debating the merits of town planning for thirty years since the British town planning expert Charles Reade first visited in 1915.<sup>24</sup> Architects led the way in espousing the virtues of town planning and were the driving forces behind the formation of the Northern Tasmanian Town Planning Association, first in 1915 and then in a revived version in 1933. Enthusiasts argued that town planning was needed to retain the city beautiful and garden city features that characterised Launceston and that had economic, health and aesthetic benefits to residents and tourists. While some progress was made in persuading aldermen to beautify the city, in practice financial impediments and a reluctance to interfere with private property owners prevented action to remove insanitary buildings and widen streets or to develop city-wide and regional plans. Although not uniformly hostile to town planning, before 1945 aldermen feared the thought of being straight-jacketed by a city-wide plan and losing their discretion to shape city growth to meet changing circumstances.

In a public lecture in May 1945 McInnis highlighted Launceston’s problems such as “sub-standard areas, access and communication, roads”, and problems arising from “uncontrolled siting of industries”.<sup>25</sup> Unless Launceston had a plan to co-ordinate “the development of all complex activities of urban life”, McInnis argued, it would be unable “to guide post-war expenditure” or obtain “the best and most lasting results in planning”. The *Examiner*, Launceston’s only newspaper, had been a critic of the lack of planning in the past and warmly endorsed McInnis’ appointment. It believed that “careful planning” now would influence “the development of the city for many years to come” and urged the Council to seek advice from McInnis on how Launceston should expand.<sup>26</sup>

In September 1945 McInnis advised the City Council to form a Town Planning Committee consisting of its aldermen and officials and members of the public, drawn perhaps from progress associations.<sup>27</sup> In October the City Council responded positively by setting up the committee, including the Mayor and Chairman of the Works Committee, the City Engineer and the City Building Surveyor, a representative of the Transport Commission and four interested citizens—Roy Smith, G.R. Hutton, Keith Darcey and R. Campbell-Smith—all of whom had been advocates of town planning during the war.<sup>28</sup>

By January 1946 the City Council had decided to prepare “a Planning Scheme to cover the whole of the City of Launceston”.<sup>29</sup> McInnis hoped that the city boundary would not be “a limiting factor” and that the City Council would call a conference to discuss “a united scheme” with adjoining municipalities.<sup>30</sup> He urged that work should begin on a scheme quickly and would be carried out “continuously”. McInnis especially noticed how industries crept into residential areas and their smoke, noise and “heavy” industrial traffic were “harmful and unhealthy”.<sup>31</sup> This underlined Launceston’s need for zoning, which would be a key part of a town-planning scheme. Planning was also needed to cope with an expected post-war growth in population. From 1921 to 1947 Launceston’s population grew from 24,305 to 40,449 or 16,144 in twenty-six years, but by 1961 the population had reached 56,721, or an increase of 16,272 in fourteen years.<sup>32</sup> The period 1947 to 1961 was one of the most rapid increases in population that Launceston had experienced and must partly explain why greater attention was given to planning from the mid-1950s

In what follows this paper focuses on the role played by McInnis in guiding the Launceston City Council in developing a planning scheme and in contributing to co-operative regional planning between Launceston and its adjoining municipalities, Beaconsfield, Evandale, Lilydale, Longford, St. Leonards and Westbury.

### **A Plan for Launceston**

McInnis had an ally on the Launceston City Council in the City Engineer Leonard Harry Bird, who quickly began work on a town plan for Launceston along lines laid down by McInnis. He began compiling a base plan and maps indicating “in colour the existing amenities, together with transport services, location and type of industries, residential areas, reserves, schools, churches, hospitals, institutions and decadent building”.<sup>33</sup> After the base plan was completed, Bird intended to zone the use of various areas to meet local conditions and prepare “a civic survey”, which would indicate and classify trades and businesses in Launceston. Bird used aerial photographs of Launceston to compile the base and interim plans that would control future development. Bird intended to create “a much needed and reliable City Map”. The Town Planning Advisory Committee would discuss the tentative zones.<sup>34</sup>

While work progressed slowly, the Town Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC) had no input into Bird’s preparations by April 1947.<sup>35</sup> After the National Council of Women, which represented twenty-nine women’s organisations, expressed interest in the location of factories and playgrounds, it was given representation on the TPAC.<sup>36</sup> The National Council of Women nominated Jean Law, Secretary of the Girls’ Home, and Marjorie Matthews, “a highly qualified architect”, as its representatives, but the City Council did not expect the TPAC to meet while it negotiated with surrounding municipalities about a plan for their combined areas.<sup>37</sup>

By May 1948 McInnis was concerned that the Launceston planning scheme had stalled and sought a report on progress from the City Council.<sup>38</sup> Acting Town Clerk Staubi sent the Civic Survey Plan, which McInnis thought was “excellent and will no doubt prove to be a very effective base upon which the scheme can be built up”.<sup>39</sup> Bird had completed a tentative zoning scheme by November 1948 involving housing, industry, commerce and parkland, which were priorities for Launceston’s future development, but he realized that “a northern development plan” involving Launceston and surrounding municipalities was desirable.<sup>40</sup> While the zoning scheme was still being considered, the

Works Committee approved Bird's proposal to discuss it with McInnis, who offered advice and in July 1950 sent a copy of "the form of zoning control which is suggested as the method of giving effect to zoning in a town planning scheme".<sup>41</sup>

While the zoning scheme went through its long gestation period, the City Council regularly sought McInnis' views on the location of service stations, the building of workshops in residential areas and the location of second hand car yards.<sup>42</sup> McInnis advised Bird that the growth of Launceston would continually raise such issues and that the zoning plan should be sent for his provisional approval as soon as possible. McInnis was generous with his time and in imparting his knowledge during the final stages of submitting the zoning scheme for approval.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the City Council let matters drift and failed to confront the growing planning needs of the city, such as overcoming congestion and inadequate car parking in the centre and failing to provide for shopping centres in outlying suburbs.<sup>44</sup> In July 1954 the *Examiner* urged the Council to stop vacillating and "make planning a fact not the fiction it is to a large extent at present".<sup>45</sup>

Growing public dissatisfaction was reflected in the March 1955 criticism by Alderman F.J.C. White, an insurance inspector, that the Council had been working to a "shortsighted and unrealistic" Tentative Zoning Scheme (TZS) that had been completed in 1948, but whose merits had "never" been debated by the Council.<sup>46</sup> Backed by architects, the Real Estate Institute and the Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures, White argued for "a firm plan for the future development of Launceston" as soon as possible. Opposition came from Alderman Thyne, who did not believe that "a firm, rigid plan was workable", and by five votes to three aldermen passed his motion that the TZS be considered by a committee, who could recommend "any desirable amendments".<sup>47</sup> In May 1955 the City Council reestablished the Launceston Town Planning Committee with three aldermen and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Manufactures, the Real Estate Institute, the National Council of Women, the Institute of Architects and the Institute of Valuers.<sup>48</sup>

As planning had lagged in part because of staff shortages and lack of trained personnel, McInnis appointed his acting Assistant Commissioner for Town and Country Planning, Hans Westerman, to provide practical help to the City Council with traffic planning and zoning.<sup>49</sup> Westerman saw a zoning scheme as a first step "to restrict undesirable development", but realised there was "more attached to the planning of a city in which it is a pleasure to live, a city which is great".<sup>50</sup> Quoting Sydney University's Professor Denis Winston that a planned city was "a place where our personalities can be made to expand and glow", Westerman thought that in addition to planning a city on "a functional basis, we must try to give it a heart, a soul too". He saw Launceston as not just "a place to manufacture things or move goods, cars and people around", but "a place where we can meet, shop, go to the pictures, play bowls, a place where we can work and like to live". Westerman helped the Town Planning Committee review the TZS and provided it with the surveys and tables he had compiled.<sup>51</sup> He suggested solutions to traffic problems and highlighted the lack of parks.<sup>52</sup> Westerman proposed "separate plans for each group of uses, and then a zoning plan embodying them all", which McInnis thought "a very effective method".<sup>53</sup>

In March 1956 the TZS was adopted in principle by the Launceston City Council.<sup>54</sup> The zoning scheme proposed three residential zones (closed residential, semi-residential and inner residential), three business zones (central business, inner business and suburban business), three industrial zones (light industrial, heavy industrial and noxious and hazardous) and one rural zone.<sup>55</sup> The committee devised

these zones after considering traffic needs, especially ringroads and outlets; flood dangers affecting residential development; existing building regulations, including preventing “undesirable activities” in “good class” residential areas; “economy in the costs of development, particularly in the area called “the urban fringe”; the distribution of shopping centres and children’s playgrounds; zoning around “special uses” such as hospitals and racecourses; and preservation of the existing skyline from “indiscriminate building”. Zoning would be controlled by a map of zones to indicate where the zones were located; a table of use classes, which classified land and buildings into twenty-seven use-classes; and a table of zones, which indicated whether the City Council would allow a use-class in a particular zone or not.

A degree of flexibility was built into the TZS. This was best illustrated by shops, which were allowed in business zones, but the Council could also allow them in industrial zones.<sup>56</sup> To avoid further “commercial ribbon development”, shops would not be permitted along major arteries. Shops were not allowed in residential zones, but, if corner shops fulfilled “a need and would not be detrimental to the neighbourhood”, the Council could recommend approval to the Commissioner as laid down in the Act. The same consideration would determine whether a service station would be allowed in a residential area. Another element of flexibility was the Council’s power “to extend an existing zone to cover an area contiguous to that zone”. Such powers could not be exercised too often because “zoning must be permanent to guarantee adequate protection”.

The TZS, with some 30 “painstakingly-drawn” maps and diagrams prepared by Westerman showing “every conceivable aspect of the city’s past and future growth”, was exhibited in the Queen Victoria Museum from 20 March to 4 April 1956.<sup>57</sup> After the exhibition, the City Council moved the scheme to the foyer of the Town Hall for public inspection and aldermen adopted the scheme formally in May 1956.<sup>58</sup> Only Alderman Keith Darcey strongly objected to the TZS because he thought it not “flexible enough” for a city “already showing signs of cramp” and lacked an imaginative approach to future needs.<sup>59</sup> He thought that the scheme would in any case be “ruined by uncontrolled and senseless development in adjoining municipalities”. Mayor Dorothy Edwards stressed that the plan remained “tentative” and “should be regarded as one for discussion, information and education”.

McInnis retired in 1956 before the TZS was submitted to him for provisional approval and he would have been disappointed with the vacillation of the City Council. While the TZS was used by aldermen to deal with applications for development, by November 1958 the City Council had not provisionally approved the scheme under section 14 of the Act and had not submitted the scheme for the provisional approval of the new Town and Country Planning Commissioner Neil Abercrombie under section 15 of the Act. Until such approval was given, the scheme could not “legally be placed before the public for the statutory period of 3 months” for comment and criticism. This meant that any objections to the zoning proposals would have no legal effect. On Abercrombie’s advice, the TZS was revised in 1959, but was still not formally adopted under the provisions of the Act. In the 1960s, with agitation most prominently by the Launceston Urban Planning Group from 1965, grew a general desire to prepare a formal Town Planning Scheme, which was begun in August 1967 with the appointment of C.J. Taylor as Town Planning Officer and completed in 1968.<sup>60</sup> The plan was finally adopted in 1976.<sup>61</sup>

## Planning in the Tamar Valley

In April 1946 McInnis wrote to the municipalities adjoining Launceston that, as the City Council had begun preparing a planning scheme, they should hold a conference “to obtain continuity and co-ordination in planning”.<sup>62</sup> They should discuss “the desirability of planning one co-ordinated scheme for the metropolitan area of Launceston; the probable boundaries of such a scheme; and the means by which it could be carried out”. At a conference held between the Launceston, Longford and Lilydale municipalities on 1 May, McInnis explained the advantages of such a scheme for future growth and the meeting affirmed “the desirability and urgent necessity” of a plan “embracing the City of Launceston and the area, irrespective of municipal boundaries, of which that City is the natural centre”.<sup>63</sup> They agreed that Town Planning Committees should be established in each municipality “to confer upon and determine areas to be included in such a plan”. The various councils considered combining to appoint “a qualified Town Planner ... to prepare a plan embracing the City and surrounding Districts”, but for financial reasons this was not proceeded with.<sup>64</sup>

In August 1948 McInnis told the Planning Institute that developing “an effective plan” for the six municipalities had “so far been beyond my powers as a salesman”.<sup>65</sup> The rural municipalities had “a long-standing distrust” of the Launceston City Council because “ill-advised extensions of the City boundaries” had resulted in the loss of “developed suburbs”. They felt that they were merely “building up suburbs for the City”. McInnis approached rural Councils individually, invited to them to conferences and formed a Regional Committee, but could not overcome distrust of the Launceston City Council. Even a plea for co-operation over regional planning by visiting British town planning expert and author of the Greater London Plan 1944 and Clyde Valley Regional Plan 1946 Patrick Abercrombie failed to galvanise the municipalities into joint action.<sup>66</sup>

The Northern Regional Planning Committee, formed by the State and Federal governments, around 1945 to develop northern Tasmania economically, hoped “community spirit” would get behind planning.<sup>67</sup> It agreed with McInnis on the advantages of developing a plan for the northern region as it foresaw a period of rapid economic growth.<sup>68</sup> McInnis welcomed the Northern Regional Planning Committee’s support to achieve “proper, far-sighted” and co-ordinated regional planning.<sup>69</sup> The *Examiner* advocated a Greater Launceston and the extension of Launceston’s boundaries as a solution to planning problems in the Tamar region.<sup>70</sup> McInnis agreed that boundaries needed to be extended, but declined to suggest in what ways. He thought that boundaries “should not be fixed by the amount of development which has occurred” as in Launceston, but by conformity to watersheds and wanted all drainage and sewerage to be dealt with by one local authority.<sup>71</sup>

One key reason that a plan was needed for the Tamar Valley region was to provide for efficient road communication between Launceston and surrounding municipalities. McInnis worked closely with the Director of Public Works to widen highways, build by-passes “to avoid shopping areas and congested localities” and preserve highways for through traffic in areas of new subdivision development.<sup>72</sup> Although a joint plan had not been achieved in the Tamar Valley, McInnis had “continually viewed the major road system in the area, as a whole, doing all I can to build up a plan for it”. He had asked Bird to design a road plan within Launceston that extended out into the suburbs and joined up with highways. McInnis found Bird’s plan of “considerable service” when “co-ordinating subdivisions and ... considering proposals for road improvements”.<sup>73</sup> McInnis also advised the City Council that there was no alternative to taking part of the land from the much beloved Royal

Park to build “an outer ringroad along the Esplanade, joining up with the West Tamar Highway”, which would be “a vital link in the State network”.<sup>74</sup>

Another reason that a plan of the Tamar Valley was necessary was the Federal Government’s interest in “regional planning for the decentralized development of Australia”, including developing a “leading provincial” town like Launceston into an industrial centre.<sup>75</sup> Director General of Regional Development Grenfell Rudduck expected such development to lead to rapid population growth, but was worried that without “a sub-regional plan” for the Tamar Valley such growth would be “uncontrolled” and cause social problems. Such a plan could be used as a model for other areas in Australia.<sup>76</sup> Rudduck favoured “a series of plans” showing urban growth over five-yearly intervals and taking into account the needs of industry, housing and town services. Regional planning was strongly supported by Premier Robert Cosgrove, who saw the necessity of overriding municipal boundaries and basing regional planning on “more real economic, social and community interests”.<sup>77</sup>

McInnis assured Rudduck that the growth of the Greater Launceston area was not “entirely uncontrolled” because of his control of subdivision development, which was “now complete throughout the area surrounding the Tamar”.<sup>78</sup> McInnis had also begun work on a regional plan for the Tamar, where Lilydale was the only municipality not to prepare a scheme. Once the plan was complete, the Minister for Lands and Works intended to call a conference of local authorities and obtain “concerted action in the planning and development of the region”.

In 1951 progress on co-operation was expected to follow from the visit of Professor W.G. Holford of the University of London, “an eminent authority on town and regional planning” who had played a leading role in developing post-war town planning and largely designed the New Towns scheme in Britain.<sup>79</sup> The Federal Government sponsored Holford’s visit as a way of stimulating interest in regional development. In August 1951 at a lunch arranged by the Northern Tasmanian Development League, a private body interested in economic development, Holford stressed that future development would be obstructed by “competitive influences” among municipalities.<sup>80</sup>

In October 1951 McInnis met with the Northern Regional Committee to discuss the need for a Tamar Valley regional planning committee. All agreed that this was necessary because of the rapid growth in the area and the development of a port at Bell Bay.<sup>81</sup> In January 1952 the Minister for Lands and Works Eric Reece announced the appointment of the Tamar Valley Planning Committee (TVPC) chaired by McInnis and comprising nineteen representatives from local, State and Federal governments, the Launceston Marine Board, the Northern Tasmanian Development League, the Northern Regional Committee and the University of Tasmania.<sup>82</sup> This advisory committee would report on plans for developing the Tamar Valley to ensure “the efficient functioning of industry and commerce, the maximum output of primary production, and the best work and recreation conditions”. The *Examiner* thought that McInnis’ “leadership” would ensure that the committee applied “intelligence and vision to shaping the growth of an entire region”.<sup>83</sup> Not everyone felt this way because, when McInnis met with the Wardens of Lilydale and St. Leonards, they expressed strong opposition to a Greater Launceston.<sup>84</sup> What McInnis later called “the Greaterisation difficulty” stood in the way of co-operation between Councils.<sup>85</sup>

Over the next two years the TVPC compiled “a substantial amount of basic information relating to future planning for the Tamar Valley area”, but still needed to complete “considerable research” and

to secure an expert planning officer to co-ordinate the information into usable plans.<sup>86</sup> In March the TVPC formed two sub-committees to begin “detailed work on a master plan for the area”. One sub-committee worked on traffic and transport and the other dealt just with Launceston.<sup>87</sup> Both sub-committees would work from interim reports prepared by Westerman.

In 1955 the Northern Metropolitan Planning Committee was established and for “the first time united the representatives of the city of Launceston and its surrounding local authorities around the table to discuss the development of Launceston as a whole”.<sup>88</sup> McInnis appointed Westerman to assist the committee prepare “a master plan for the Launceston area”.<sup>89</sup> In a paper outlining his ideas, Westerman argued that their objective should be to do more than stopping the different local schemes from clashing; they should aim “to draw up one plan for the whole area and to see that local schemes fit into this overall scheme”. Westerman firmly believed that local government functions had to move beyond the municipal area not only for master planning, but also for water supply, traffic and transport, where it was desirable for local authorities to “combine and carry them out together”.

Westerman made it clear that the committee was “not a disguised attempt to create a Greater Launceston” but equally was not “designed to foster parochialism”. He expected “give and take” from the representatives of the various local authorities on the committee in the quest to make Launceston “a worthy place to live, well planned by its citizens for the future”.<sup>90</sup> To develop an effective master plan required information on the growth, distribution and “changing structure” of the population, on the socio-economic functions of Launceston and current and future land use, and on “planning principles, legislation and finance”. They also needed “a good base map”.

Despite meeting infrequently, the committee produced a topographical base map for the Launceston region, prepared “a very tentative master plan” and “unanimously” agreed to recommend to their Councils that a planning authority be established.<sup>91</sup> Apart from “minor details”, the master plan proposals conformed to the City Council’s TZS.<sup>92</sup> Wrangling between the Councils concerned and fears that the Launceston City Council would be the dominant force delayed the formation of a planning authority for the region until 1969 when, again with constant pressure from the Launceston Urban Planning Group, the Tamar Valley Regional Planning Authority was established and began a new era in “collective co-operation”, especially in areas like shipping, transportation and education.<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that Ronald McInnis was a catalyst for change in the planning of Launceston. As the eminence grise of planning in Tasmania, he was charged with persuading municipalities to complete planning schemes and to encourage co-operative regional planning where the topography and services of an area made this a logical step. In many ways Launceston and adjoining municipalities can be seen as a model of his approach to his task, both in terms of success and failure. McInnis put much effort into helping the Launceston City Council develop a planning scheme and offered the services of his talented assistant Hans Westerman, who was crucial in gaining acceptance of a zoning scheme for the city. Unfortunately, aldermen did not formally adopt the zoning scheme under the Town Planning Act despite urging from McInnis’ successor Neil

Abercrombie, but the scheme was a break through for planning in Launceston and was a necessary step on the road towards a formal Town Planning Scheme.

Perhaps even more praiseworthy, because even more difficult, was McInnis' role in furthering the cause of co-operative and regional planning in the Tamar region. Without McInnis taking on the role of honest broker, stressing the benefits of co-operation and arranging conferences, it is doubtful that the municipalities surrounding Launceston would have overcome their suspicions of the motives of the Launceston City Council and taken the first tentative steps towards master planning. Again, Westerman's assistance helped make this happen.

McInnis was a man of infinite patience and understanding and a town planner with high professional and ethical standards. He battled tirelessly and mostly successfully against powerful interest groups and with limited resources to broaden the understanding of planning in post-war Launceston and its adjoining municipalities. What had once been an unattainable ideal was well on the way to becoming a practical reality by the time he retired in 1956.

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<sup>1</sup> Krueckeberg 1993, pp 218-19.

<sup>2</sup> Krueckeberg 1993, p 219.

<sup>3</sup> Freestone 1993, pp 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Conversation with Frank Bolt, 25 August 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Sandercock 1977, pp 97-108.

<sup>6</sup> Wannop and Cherry 1994, p 39.

<sup>7</sup> Freestone 2007, pp 76-8.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander 2000, p 102.

<sup>9</sup> Petrow 1995.

<sup>10</sup> *Examiner*, 27 May 1943, p 4.

<sup>11</sup> Robson 1997, pp 137-44.

<sup>12</sup> Petrow 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Petrow 1997.

<sup>14</sup> R.A. McInnis, "Modern Planning - Its Scope, Aims, and Objects", July 1937, Town and Country Planning Commissioner General Correspondence Files AA235/5, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, (hereafter TAHO).

<sup>15</sup> R.A. McInnis, "The Citizen and Town Planning", 16 June 1954, AA235/5, TAHO.

<sup>16</sup> R.A. McInnis, "Just 'Houses' - or 'Homes', June 1950 and 'Are Our Towns to Develop? - or Just Grow", 18 April 1945, AA235/5, TAHO.

<sup>17</sup> Town planning notes file, R.A. McInnis, "Town Planning: What of its Ideals?", August 1936, pp 2-3, AA235/9, TAHO.

<sup>18</sup> R.A. McInnis, "Town and Country Planning in Tasmania", August 1945 (draft), p 1, AA235/5, TAHO.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Examiner*, 20 February 1945, p 4, 22 March 1945, p 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Examiner*, 22 March 1945, p 4.

<sup>22</sup> Tranter, Kemsley and Associates to Whom It May Concern, 6 February 1946, Bain and Jackson to Town Clerk, Launceston City Council (hereafter LCC) 33/3, 1946-47, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (hereafter QVMAG).

<sup>23</sup> Petrow 1995-6.

<sup>24</sup> Petrow 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Examiner*, 4 May 1945, p 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Examiner*, 29 August 1945, p 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Examiner*, 1 September 1945, p 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Examiner*, 13 October 1945, p 6, 16 October 1945, p 4.

<sup>29</sup> Town Clerk to McInnis, 22 January 1946, Town and Country Planning Commissioner, Planning Files AA236/1/100, TAHO.

- <sup>30</sup> McInnis to Town Clerk, 23 January 1946, LCC 33/3 (1946-47), QVMAG.
- <sup>31</sup> *Examiner*, 6 February 1946, p 4.
- <sup>32</sup> ABS 2006.
- <sup>33</sup> Memorandum by Bird for Works Committee, 22 March 1946, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG; City Engineer's Report in City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1945-1946, pp. 49-50.
- <sup>34</sup> Launceston City Council, Minutes of Meetings, 15 October 1945, AB 396/1/14, p. 440, TAHO.
- <sup>35</sup> Roy Smith to Town Clerk, 29 April 1947, Town Clerk to Smith, 7 May 1947, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG.
- <sup>36</sup> Memorandum for Mayor, 6 August 1947, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG.
- <sup>37</sup> Edwards to Town Clerk, 6 December 1947, Town Clerk to Edwards, 18 December 1947, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG.
- <sup>38</sup> McInnis to Town Clerk, 11 May 1948, AA 236/1/101, TAHO.
- <sup>39</sup> Staubi to McInnis, 18 June 1948, McInnis to Town Clerk, 23 June 1948, AA 236/1/101, TAHO.
- <sup>40</sup> *Examiner*, 25 November 1948, p 2.
- <sup>41</sup> McInnis to Town Clerk, 21 July 1950, AA 236/1/101, TAHO; Launceston City Council, Minutes of Meetings of Council Committees, 22 November 1948, AB 392/1/54, p. 699, TAHO; City Engineer's Report, City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1947-1948, p. 50.
- <sup>42</sup> Town Clerk to McInnis, 25 March 1952, McInnis to Town Clerk, 27 March 1952, Town Clerk to McInnis, 10 July 1952, 31 July 1952, Town Clerk to McInnis, 22 February 1955, McInnis to Town Clerk, 24 February 1955, AA 236/1/99, TAHO.
- <sup>43</sup> Minutes of a meeting, McInnis and representatives of the Launceston City Council, 23 June 1954, AA 236/1/99, TMAG.
- <sup>44</sup> *Mercury*, 9 July 1954, p 3; *Examiner*, 26 July 1954, p 2.
- <sup>45</sup> *Examiner*, 29 July 1954, p 2.
- <sup>46</sup> *Examiner*, 6 July 1951, p 3, 29 March 1955, p 3.
- <sup>47</sup> *Examiner*, 19 April 1955, p 3.
- <sup>48</sup> Launceston City Council, Minutes of Meetings of Council Committees, 9 May 1955, AB 392/1/58, p. 161, TAHO; *Examiner*, 1 June 1955, p 3.
- <sup>49</sup> *Examiner*, 1 June 1955, p 3, 20 March 1956, p 3.
- <sup>50</sup> Hans Westerman, "Launceston Area Planning Committee: Suggested Basis for Discussion", 6 May 1955, Town and Country Planning Commissioner, General Correspondence, AA 235/1/130, TAHO.
- <sup>51</sup> *Examiner*, 22 June 1955, p 4.
- <sup>52</sup> *Examiner*, 1 September 1955, p 3.
- <sup>53</sup> Diary of R A McInnis, 5 October 1955, in possession of the author.
- <sup>54</sup> Annual Report of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner 1956-57, AA 235/1/6, TAHO.
- <sup>55</sup> Launceston Town Planning Committee, Explanatory Notes on the Tentative Zoning Scheme, pp. 1-2, Newspaper Cuttings on Launceston – Town Planning, QVMAG.
- <sup>56</sup> Launceston Town Planning Committee, Explanatory Notes on the Tentative Zoning Scheme, p. 3, Newspaper Cuttings on Launceston – Town Planning, QVMAG; Director Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Report, City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1955-1956, pp 69-70.
- <sup>57</sup> Annual Report of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner 1956-57, AA 235/1/6, TAHO; *Examiner*, 20 March 1956, p 3.
- <sup>58</sup> Annual Report of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner 1956-57, AA 235/1/6, Abercrombie to Town Clerk, 27 November 1958, AA 236/1/285, TAHO; Launceston City Council, Minutes of Meetings of Council Committees, 28 May 1956, AB 392/1/58, pp. 605-6.
- <sup>59</sup> *Examiner*, 22 May 1956, p 5.
- <sup>60</sup> City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1968-1969, pp 11, 19.
- <sup>61</sup> Cleaver 1979, p 112.
- <sup>62</sup> McInnis to City of Launceston and Municipalities of Beaconsfield, Evandale, Lilydale, Longford, St. Leonards and Westbury, 18 April 1946, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG.
- <sup>63</sup> Town Clerk to Council Clerks Beaconsfield, Evandale, Lilydale, Longford, St. Leonards and Westbury, 2 May 1946, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG; *Examiner*, 2 May 1946, p 5.
- <sup>64</sup> Town Clerk to Dorothy Edwards, Secretary, National Council of Women, 29 July 1947, LCC 33/3, 1946-47, QVMAG; *Examiner*, 23 August 1947, p 2.

- <sup>65</sup> R.A. McInnis, "Town and Country Planning in Tasmania", lecture to Planning Institute of Australia, August 1948, AA 235/1/70, TAHO.
- <sup>66</sup> *Examiner*, 4 November 1948, p 3; Wannop and Cherry, pp. 38-9.
- <sup>67</sup> *Examiner*, 30 March 1950, p 4.
- <sup>68</sup> *Examiner*, 2 November 1946, p 2.
- <sup>69</sup> *Examiner*, 11 January 1947, p 3.
- <sup>70</sup> *Examiner*, 6 July 1950, p 2.
- <sup>71</sup> *Examiner*, 7 July 1950, p 3.
- <sup>72</sup> McInnis to W.C.S. Oliver, Secretary, Northern Tasmanian Development League, 24 May 1951, AA 235/1/131, TAHO.
- <sup>73</sup> McInnis to Town Clerk, 17 July 1950, AA 236/1/101, TAHO.
- <sup>74</sup> McInnis to Town Clerk, 22 September 1955, AA 236/1/99, Abercrombie to Commissioner for Transport, 26 March 1956, AA 235/1/23, TAHO.
- <sup>75</sup> Grenfell Rudduck, Director of Regional Development to Carter, 8 June 1915, LCC 33/3, 1950-55, QVMAG.
- <sup>76</sup> Rudduck to McInnis, 30 April 1951, 9 May 1951, Rudduck to Carter, 3 August 1951, AA 235/1/131, TAHO.
- <sup>77</sup> Holland 1953, p 158; Petrow 2012.
- <sup>78</sup> McInnis to Rudduck, 4 May 1951, McInnis to Oliver, 24 May 1951, AA 235/1/131, TAHO.
- <sup>79</sup> F.J. Carter, Deputy Under Secretary, Premier's Office to Town Clerk, 5 July 1951, LCC 33/3, 1950-55, QVMAG.
- <sup>80</sup> *Examiner*, 23 August 1951, p 3.
- <sup>81</sup> Meeting of McInnis with Northern Regional Committee, 9 October 1951, AA 235/1/131, TAHO.
- <sup>82</sup> *Mercury*, 23 January 1952, p. 7; *Examiner*, 15 February 1952, p 6.
- <sup>83</sup> *Examiner*, 24 January 1952, p 2.
- <sup>84</sup> Diary of McInnis, 17 April, 8 May 1952.
- <sup>85</sup> Diary of McInnis, 28 March 1955.
- <sup>86</sup> *Examiner*, 1 May 1954, p 3.
- <sup>87</sup> *Examiner*, 30 March 1955, p 7.
- <sup>88</sup> Annual Report of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner 1956-57, AA 235/1/6, TAHO.
- <sup>89</sup> Westerman, "Launceston Area Planning Committee".
- <sup>90</sup> Westerman, "Launceston Area Planning Committee".
- <sup>91</sup> Annual Report of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner 1956-57, AA 235/1/6, TAHO; Abercrombie to Bird, 15 March 1957, 15 March 1957, Municipalities – Town Planning, LCC 3/1/1526, TAHO; *Examiner*, 16 August 1957, p 3.
- <sup>92</sup> Launceston City Council, Minutes of Meetings of Council Committees, 24 September 1956, AB 392/1/58, p. 760, TAHO.
- <sup>93</sup> *Mercury*, 5 March 1958, pp 3, 5; City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1968-1969, p 19; City of Launceston, Tasmania, Mayor's Valedictory Address and Annual Departmental Reports 1969-1970, p 34.

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