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Tower plan would raise city's profile

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Dark Mofo's tower of light

HOBART aldermen would have to waive height restrictions if a 117m "art tower" is to be built in the CBD.

Arts patron Penny Clive's Detached Cultural Organisation is proposing the $8 million project, which would rise above the former Mercury building in Argyle St.

Canada-based electronic artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, whose lightproject Pulse Column is replicating the tower during Dark MOFO, has presented his vision at a festival forum.

Considered a public space in the sky, the building would include spotlights and 140,000 LEDs programmed and powered by people walking up the tower's stairs.

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Artist impression of proposed Art Tower in Hobart. Detached. Image supplied.
Source: Supplied

"If it's a celebration then you power on your lights," Lozano-Hemmer said.

"If it's a normal Tuesday night and people need their sleep, you tone those lights right down."

The tower would be financed by philanthropists Ms Clive and husband Bruce Neill, and has been given moral support by MONA founder David Walsh and Premier Will Hodgman.

Hobart Lord Mayor Sue Hickey has welcomed the project but said it would need to get past council guidelines that included a 42m height restriction.

Aldermen can use their discretion to waive the restriction — as they did for the Myer and UTAS CBD developments.

"It's a matter of heritage, height and probably public opinion at the end of the day," Ald Hickey said.

"I'm really hoping Hobart does embrace something like this."

Detached hopes to have a planning application with the council within four months and the tower built by June 2017.

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It is the first of the non-profit group's arts projects for the 5000sq m Mercury precinct it bought two years ago.

Detached project director Leigh Carmichael said the prefabricated rings of the tower could be put up using hydraulic jacks in about 30 days.

"We've got a private philanthropist who's backing the project so, provided we can get it through council and the community embraces it, then it will be built," he said.

Mr Carmichael said no government money was being sought, with Hobart City Council having backed away from offering financial support to private developers.

Hobart alderman Anna Reynolds, who has opposed the relaxation of height restrictions, said the debate would be about the tower's impact on nearby heritage buildings.

Bass Bath immerses participants in extremely low-end sound frequencies, as strobe lighting and smoke effects add to the experience.

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