



Visionary, but port in a storm as locals get their wind up

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What happened to all the State builders and visionaries? Judging by some of the reaction to yesterday's announcement of a \$10 billion offshore development at Fremantle's North Quay, the last lot were run out of town with pitchforks and when the new generation put their heads up they get speared through the neck.

Perhaps heady from boom-fuelled bravura and taking a lead from bold State Government proposals like the Perth waterfront, the more than 30 business high-flyers behind North Port Quay thought it might be safe to float a radical concept.

Apparently not. Before the concept was even officially launched, Fremantle MLA Jim McGinty said it was

unacceptable and looked like Dubai. It was a call-to-arms for Fremantle's "not in my backyard" establishment and they would have been spitting into their rose-hip tea had they not all been stuck in a council meeting at the time observing the monthly ritual of baying for mayor Peter Tagliaferri's blood.

Premier Alan Carpenter, last briefed on the project three years ago before serious revisions, declared it would not happen. Former Opposition leader Colin Barnett, consigned to electoral history by his canal grand vision at the last election, said he "fundamentally opposed" it.

Where is the leadership opposing something before you have even been briefed?

There is no question that valid concerns about engineering and environmental aspects must be thrashed out through debate, and much like the Perth waterfront project, it will change on the back of consultation. There are huge legal and planning hurdles to jump through and ultimately gaining the co-operation of the Government and Fremantle Ports is essential. That is going to require significant changes.

But for a city with a heritage forged by grand visionaries, Fremantle residents, including Mr McGinty, should at least take the time to listen to the detail of what is proposed before sharpening their pitchforks.