



4 February 2023

Mr Simon Scott
Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts

Dear Sir,

There are numerous arguments why the proposed Hobart stadium should be strongly opposed, but in this brief submission I would like to raise just a couple of issues that the Committee may not have considered. These are, firstly, the requirement that the stadium be roofed and, secondly, the State Government's unquestioning acceptance of unrealistic comparisons with mainland AFL stadiums.

1. The requirement that the proposed stadium be roofed and the associated issue of lighting.

It is a meteorological fact that Hobart has fewer rain days (when 1mm or more of rain is recorded) than any other capital city from April to August inclusive, the principal five months of the AFL football season. As the following figures indicate, Hobart averages only slightly more than 5 rain days each month from April to August, even pipping Brisbane for this lack of rain, while Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth have approximately twice the number of days each month that record more than 1mm of rain: Hobart average 5.22 rain days per month; Brisbane 5.4 rain days; Sydney 8.16 rain days; Melbourne 9.4 rain days; Adelaide 10.28 rain days; and Perth 10.56 rain days.

(These figures are calculated from the Bureau of Meteorology website and use the Hobart Botanical Gardens statistics as the weather station closest to the proposed stadium. For the other capital cities, statistics are used for weather stations closest to the city centre).

If rainy weather can be immediately refuted as a valid reason for the requirement of a roofed stadium (which would be only the second such stadium in Australia after the Docklands stadium in Melbourne) then surely there must be other reasons why the stadium needs to be roofed. This raises the issue of the light towers that would be necessary in an unroofed stadium for night games and entertainment. Such light towers need to be high, maybe not as high as the MCG lights which are 85 metres or approximately 27 storeys in height, but they would need to be 60-70 metres in height (Wrest Point Casino, our tallest building, is 73 metres high). Such light towers at Macquarie Point in the CBD would be both visually obtrusive and unattractive during the daytime and far too glaring at night. In both ways, day and night, the light towers and the stadium generally would unacceptably dominate the waterfront area, adversely affecting the attractiveness of the area for both tourists and locals alike by impacting incompatibly with other potential uses of the Macquarie Point site.

Perhaps there is one other point to be considered, in addition to the lighting, regarding the roof requirement. If the proposed stadium does not have a roof, then a very significant point of difference with the existing Blundstone Arena is removed. This would leave the issue of the relative accessibility of the two stadiums as probably the key issue, an issue that would be contested as

probably the majority of Tasmanians, in the absence of adequate public transport, would prefer to continue to drive to the stadium, something they can currently do at Bellerive which would be very difficult at Macquarie Point.

In a nutshell, the paradox is that, though the stadium roof in itself is completely unnecessary, without the roof the case for the Macquarie Point stadium is so weakened in terms of the lighting issue and differentiating the stadium from Blundstone Arena, that it becomes untenable for all apart from the vested interests involved.

2. The State Government's unquestioning acceptance of unrealistic comparisons with mainland AFL stadiums

The AFL head Gillon McLachlan has on several occasions asserted that Hobart will experience similar benefits that other capital cities have gained, he argues, from their inner-city stadiums. Not once, however, have these comparisons been questioned by the State Government – or by the Hobart *Mercury* which has adopted an extremely biased pro-stadium position.

The powerful AFL “supremo”, as styled by the media, is particularly fond of using the example of Perth’s Optus Stadium to argue that a Hobart stadium would be similarly successful. However, what Mr McLachlan neglects to point out is that the Perth Stadium’s original cost estimate was \$700 million, less than the projected cost of the Hobart stadium, but this cost had blown out to approximately \$1.8 billion by its completion in 2020 (and it does not even have a roof despite Perth having more rain days than any other capital during the football season!) Mr McLachlan also failed to mention that Perth has about nine times the population of Hobart and two well-established AFL clubs with a total membership of 160,000 to help fill the stadium and pay for it.

Similar comparisons are made by the AFL with stadiums in Adelaide and Melbourne. But the Adelaide stadium is hardly a valid comparison as it is merely a revamping of a long existing football oval. And any comparison with Melbourne’s Dockland’s stadium is ludicrous as Melbourne is a metropolis with more than twenty times Hobart’s population and has no less than nine long-established AFL clubs to support the stadium with multiple matches every week.

Many other arguments about the need for and the cost of the proposed stadium could be made. For example, since first proposed less than a year ago the Australian construction industry has been subjected to severe inflationary cost pressures which must have already blown out the original estimates for the stadium’s costs and projected timeline. However, I shall leave such arguments to those more qualified than I to discuss such economic aspects.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Patrick Naughtin PhD