Submission to
Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts
Regarding the Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's process into the feasibility planning for a new sporting and event stadium in Hobart.

By Hobart Northern Suburbs Rail Action Group

Criteria for examination (with some abbreviations for clarity);

1. The process used to select Macquarie Point as the site
2. How a new roofed stadium became a condition of a Tasmanian licence for an AFL team.
3. The figures and assumptions contained within any State Government commissioned reports and economic impacts.
4. The Tasmanian Government's expectation regarding financial contributions from the Australian Government, AFL and third parties.
5. The level of borrowing and costs on the assumed $375 Tasmanian Government contribution.
6. The future of Blundstone Arena and UTAS stadium.
7. The role of Major Stadiums business unit within State Growth and the newly established statutory authority Stadiums Tasmania.
8. Any other incidental matter incidental thereto.

As a community lobby group, the Hobart Northern Suburbs Rail Action Group Inc. (HNSRAG), has no comment to make on the economic suitability or otherwise of the proposed stadium.
However, HNSRAG does have strong views on the transport arrangements that would be required for any new major stadium that might be built in Tasmania, in terms of the capacity, efficiency and suitability of the various transport modes that are and could be made available.

This submission will therefore only address **Criteria 1, 3, 6** and **8**.

In relation to the process (Criteria 1), HNSRAG notes that the summary does not mention transport in any significance. The pre-feasibility study by Aurecon notes on page 24 that; "**No traffic analysis has been assessed or undertaken as part of this advice and the site access strategy is subject to significant change as a result of any future assessment**."
This is a quite remarkable gap in the assessment of location suitability, and HNSRAG notes further that the only other sites considered for the stadium were all located very close to the one chosen, thus the transport issues would not be significantly different for any of those locations.
On page 57 of the Aurecon report, it is noted that "**As the Tasman Highway is the major access/ exit routes to both stadium sites, it is likely to experience traffic pressure, especially for turning movements to/ from the stadium site**."
Bus stops are mentioned and the Northern Corridor is also mentioned as being an option. The report then goes on to highly recommend a shuttle bus service and a ferry terminal, and adds that temporary traffic management plans should be developed.
On page 57 it is noted that the above commentary is "**the result of a quick assessment**".
HNSRAG's 'quick assessment' is that the presence of a major stadium at Macquarie Point, in this case proposed to have the capacity of up to 30,000 persons (23,000 seated), will far exceed the capacity and capability of Hobart's existing transport network. To put it as bluntly and succinctly as possible; it will **fail without rail**.
In the report by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC), Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor, Transport Mode Study: Options Assessment Report (TMS:OAR), it is noted that "Hobart has the lowest public

transport mode of Australia's capital cities". It also notes that Hobart is; "the second least densely populated Capital City in Australia."
The existing bus services have understandably done nothing to stem the sprawl in suburban growth nor been able to adequately cater for what demand there might have been for public transport. It is thus somewhat difficult to understand how a busway will be able to attract or even manage the sudden acute high transport demand that a major stadium requires, given the pre-existing negative connotations that exist around Hobart's bus services.
At this time no specific details have been released regarding the Government's preferred option of constructing a busway. However, some significant constraints exist;

1. The Hobart Northern Suburbs railway is a single track line. Whilst it was previously a double track suburban railway (as far as Claremont), the space taken by the other track has since been re-purposed for the cycle-way. There is still sufficient space for passing loops for a suburban or light rail service, this is of limited practical use for a busway – likely preventing it from being a true busway, but a 'tidal busway' instead, meaning that services could only go in one direction at a time (e.g. city-bound in the mornings, north-bound in the afternoons, with a significant service gap in the middle as it changed direction).
2. Buses on a tidal busway could only access each end of it via the normal road network. Thus if there were any significant road network blockages (as has happened recently – January 2023), buses would not be able to get to the start of the busway, and it would be just as incapable of functioning as the rest of the road transport network.
3. If the busway were to be operated in the same way as a single line rail network with passing loops, it would either require more passing loops, or larger buses. Larger buses might be able to have close to the capacity of a light rail vehicle, but the larger the vehicle, generally the higher the axle-load. This would mean that the busway would require a significantly strengthened roadway surface, increasing its cost.
4. Constructing a busway will require the complete removal of the rail formation and the creation of a new hard surface capable of withstanding heavy vehicles. It is not possible to simply pour concrete over the top of the existing rails and ballast.

Rail is approximately seven times more energy efficient than road transport of any kind. A double-track commuter rail train service has the **capacity of a six-lane highway**. When it comes to moving large crowds, there is only one transport system that guarantees results – rail.

The Australasian Railway Association notes in its recent report, **The Renaissance of Light Rail,** that;
"Light rail might be more expensive to construct than introducing a new bus route, but operationally it is comparatively cheaper to run than other modes resulting in reduced whole of life costs (e.g. lower operating costs per passenger."
The report also notes that; "Light rail can move between 4,000 and 20,000 people per hour in one direction in space equivalent to one lane of road traffic. The same space dedicated to an arterial road lane could only move 900 cars (or less than 1,000 people) per hour, while ***the same space dedicated to buses would move between 2,000 and 8,000 people per hour.***" (Emphasis added).

These figures alone question the suitability of a bus service of any kind being able to handle the requirements of a major stadium. If bus services can only transport 34% of stadium attendees (assuming it has been filled to a capacity of 23,000 people), then there is considerable doubt that the remaining fifteen thousand people will be able to quickly leave if they are relying on motor vehicle transport. Only those who are relying on active transport (walking or cycling) will have comparatively few difficulties in leaving the stadium area.

HNSRAG is adamant that Hobart and its future transport demand requires the urgent revitalization and reconstruction of the existing railway for use as a commuter rail service, regardless of whether or not a major stadium is constructed at Macquarie Point.

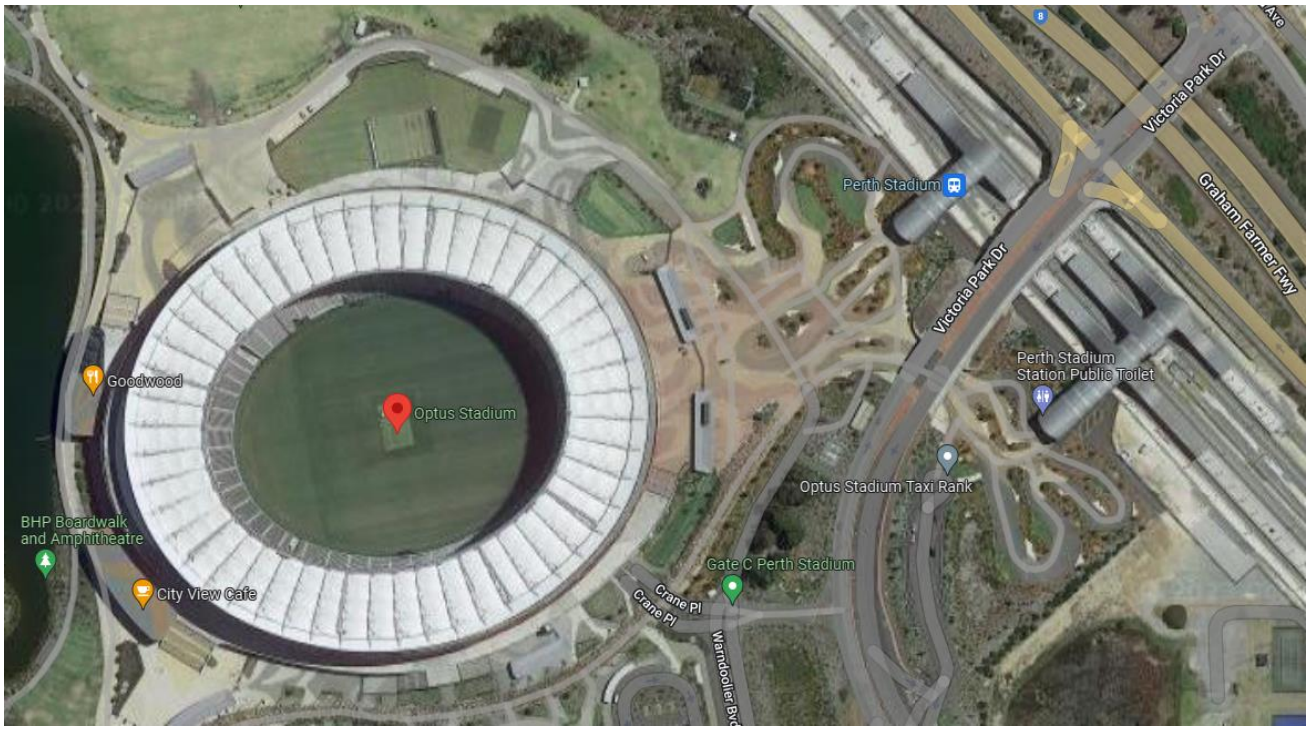
In terms of the future of Blundstone Arena and UTAS Stadium (Invermay), HNSRAG would like to highlight the continued failure of transport systems to these venues for major events. Congestion

around these venues at such times is consistent and predictable. Whilst neither of these existing stadiums have such an easy access to a possible commuter or light rail service as Macquarie Point does, any future increase in capacity at either or both of these stadiums would require more concurrent action and planning around how such large crowds can be moved in and out of the area safely and relatively quickly. It is already clear that existing bus services fail to match demand (noting that for major events at these locations, extra bus services are inevitably provided).

HNSRAG has always maintained that the optimal use for the Hobart-Northern suburbs railway is continued use as it is, a 1067mm (3'6") gauge railway with a commuter service. HNSRAG has advocated for battery-electric powered units, but almost any type of electrically-powered rail passenger vehicle would be suitable.
HNSRAG believes that the claimed increased cost (as per the recent PWC TMS:OAR report) of light rail is the consequence of the bureaucratic insistence on an unnecessary wider gauge. The claim that wider gauge vehicles are cheaper is a falsehood – the reality is that any network constructed in Hobart would require only a small number of vehicles (perhaps six to eight). A small number of vehicles ordered from any manufacturer would inevitably result in a higher unit price, regardless of the gauge. There are approximately 80 tram networks in Europe that use an even narrower 1000mm (3'3") gauge – it is disingenuous to suggest that vehicles would not be available for 1067mm gauge.

A busway will inevitably be more expensive, have less capacity and achieve far fewer of the transport goals that a commuter or light railway service can. It will be completely unable to meet the demands of a major stadium.

Almost every other major stadium in every other state has either a commuter rail or light rail service connection (some have both). These include;
Melbourne Cricket Ground
Stadium Australia (Sydney)
Optus Stadium (Perth)
Adelaide Oval
Docklands Stadium
Lang Park Stadium (Brisbane)
Sydney Cricket Ground



The above image from Google Maps shows the relatively new Optus Stadium in Perth, WA, with the Perth Stadium railway station beside. Note the extra platforms (more than a normal suburban station) to facilitate the movement of large crowds.

Alstom Citadis Light Rail vehicle in George Street, Sydney (Wikipedia Commons).
Sydney has constructed a new light rail/tram network from the CBD and extending south to Randwick and Kingsford, largely due to the existing road network having reached capacity. The existing bus services on these roads were incapable of managing the extremely high transport demand, let alone major events.

9th February 2023

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On Behalf of
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Available for further comment via;
[redacted]

Sources:
Australasian Railway Association – The True Value of Rail (Report)
Australasian Railway Association – The Renaissance of Light Rail (Report)
Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor, Transport Mode Study: Options Assessment Report by Price Waterhouse Cooper
The Mercury Newspaper (various editions)