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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MUNICIPAL OFFICES, GEORGE TOWN ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2013.

GEORGE TOWN HUB

Mr GRAEME NEILSON WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Good morning, Graeme. You indicated you had some extra information that you were kind enough to track down for us.

Mr NEILSON - I have read *Hansard* and for your assistance I have made a summary of the matters I went through, albeit rushed towards the end. The bottom half of the sheet lists the uncompleted evidence. I would like to point out that this booklet - the George Town Health Service Direction, partly funded by the Tasmanian government - has been released today by an announcement in the press and I would like to table it. It highlights the duplication of some of the services.

Working down the list, the contention that council did not act as a planning authority - I draw your attention to number 6, where it is listed on the council agenda of 17 October 2012. There is nothing listed when the council was acting as a planning authority. They moved into planning and development - they moved out of being a planning authority when they discussed this matter. I have a lot more information on that but I contend council was not acting as a planning authority.

The second sheet is getting into the crux of my submission. I think it may have been in the documents I provided last time. It's a three-page document from the Tasmanian Planning Commission for their special ninth day of their hearing and is directed to the applicants and the council. I made quick reference to that, but it's on the third page at the top, the applicants were asked to provide a statement and calculation as to the capacity for the aggregate estimate area of wide parking space demand for the hub, memorial hall, and the nearby shopping centre to be adequately met by the supply of available parking spaces when the nearby shopping centre includes consideration of parking requirements for the shopping area on Anne Street, Bathurst Street and Elizabeth Street extending south of Macquarie Street. I contend they never ever produced any documentation in response to that from the chair of the TPC, therefore their assessment was basically flawed. This is the crux of the matter: This proposal will absolutely kill the parking space.

The bottom part is the council's response. All they did was produce a doctored document to show there was no evidence of a car park to service the new hall, when there is plenty of evidence, including down to the finer details of the line marking for the parking.

Mr BOOTH - For the record of *Hansard*, you said there had been a 'doctored document' presented. Who presented that?

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Mr NEILSON - The council presented that. It took until nine days - the first document showed the clear intent and then on day nine, in response to the TPC, this document was produced which, as you can see, this section has been cut out of to show that there was no intent there and there were several other -

Mr BOOTH - They were the documents you tabled last time?

Mr NEILSON - Yes, I am pretty sure you have them. I went to considerable trouble - it wasn't trouble it was quite educational - to measure every commercial property and connect it to the planning scheme. I believe the new planning scheme has another set of figures which wouldn't be complementary to this proposal. If you just look at the bottom line of this document headed Parking, 'Available for both halls and shopping - a total of 30'.

I'm contending there that this will reduce from something like 160 or 170 parking spaces available in the east and west car park and behind the original hall that were available up to 2007 down to only 30 car-parking spaces where anyone can park for more than one hour. There is restricted parking in the whole of the main street. That wouldn't even cover the people who work in the commercial premises. This is absolutely devastating. There has been no commitment to parking for this new development. It's taking away what was established for our CBD.

If I just may go on, the next page I've thrown in two pages there for your consideration because there was some discussion on day one about the usage of the hall and maybe the redesign of the hall to suit a CFC. The first page is from the council agenda in November, where it says: 'The hall usage for the month ... totalled 93 hours, and was due to the school holidays.' The traffic report from Mr Eaton was taken during the school holidays. This proves absolutely that the traffic count, and as he put it, 'casual observation' was taken during the school holidays. Whereas you can see the hours of usage for the existing memorial hall was way down. I have included October where it shows that it is 132 hours.

Mr BOOTH - That's September, isn't it?

Mr NEILSON - I'm sorry, yes, it's in that agenda. The November agenda was for October and the October agenda shows the figures for September of 132 hours. That is even a slightly clouded figure because it includes the use for the federal elections once every three years, the Jim Mooney Gallery for a once-off and a biannual for the Auxiliary and, because of the wet weather, some indoor training for the touch football team. Last time I indicated the usage was 33 minutes, but re-examining my figures, it's 35 minutes per day per usage of each of the five sectors for the existing memorial hall.

The next page I thought was very interesting to draw to your attention. From Saturday 16 November, Minister Michelle O'Byrne, who has been overseeing this project, had this to say in the paper, and this is in relation to the St Helens Hospital where the council is seeking to co-operate to seek a suitable site for a government facility:

Health minister Michelle O'Byrne said that while a business case for the new hospital was still to be considered through the budget process, the state government had committed to working with the council to find the right site. [OK]

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If that had been the case in George Town, we wouldn't have got to this stage. I have made a note out to the side, 'no business case for the George Town hub'.

The next series of pages shows where the proponents, after they had dismissed their first option at the Dalrymple School and then the option at the YMCA - I've just made a mock-up of where the LINC would be situated if it was the first option of the proponents on Regent Square. Not that I support it being on Regent Square at all, but it makes an interesting comparison because as you can see from that black and white, it leaves the corners of the square and it also allows for the existing playground to be extended. It's in a sunny location, it's in a sheltered location, it would be a far cheaper option and it would be a community-based joint facility. It would leave the proposed site to be a car park, which it was planned to be and passed to be.

The second two pages headed George Town Council 22 May 2009, I refer you to the bottom two sentences -

The preferred location identified by the department is to the east of the current memorial hall. The second preferred in relation to the preferred location is to the west.

The second page shows the two documentations. The reason that the council was proactive to move this to the western side was quite simple. It was probably to not have to build a carpark and save a lot of money but most importantly, it was to make a provision for the bus terminus. The bus terminus was originally disallowed by RMPAT and certainly disallowed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The proponents have made no attempt to move this building further to the west to take up the space that is now not needed for the bus terminus. Whilst I don't agree that it should be there, they have been rather tardy, I think, in not re-examining and this is why I am asking you to reject it because if it was moved to the west, say the 10 metres that would be taken up by the bus depot, it would broaden that 3.7 metres between two rather tall buildings and make it much more user-friendly, and acceptable aesthetically and socially, for all the reasons.

The next one was something I did rather quickly this morning, which was just to show you the symmetrics of the square if the first option had been adopted. Again, I preface it I don't believe it should be on Regent Square; there are far more alternatives than we can discuss at this time but it will be symmetrical inasmuch as there would be the central hall and two, may I say, monstrosities either side, but the corners of the square and the axes of the square would be maintained and we would still have our parking requirements preserved.

The next rather thick document is from Pitt & Sherry. Whilst it might only be 20-odd pages, it cost the Neilson family \$5 000 for this report to be commissioned. It was not assessed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission because it, in the main, talked about process. There was an enormous amount of research done by Mr Abernathy, former planner for the Launceston Council and now in private practice, to fully assess this project. He did what the George Town Council should have done and he uses words such as 'fatally flawed'. He goes into a lot of detail into the parking and I do ask you to read this. Page 2, a lot of consideration about the parking and on the bottom of page 2 he talks about -

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The report presented to council is a mirror of the consultant's report rather than a researched assessment of the issues around the development. As such, it can be easily argued that the planning authority had not given the development due consideration and as a result, the whole process which follows from the date it is considered, is fatally flawed.'

This is coming from an expert.

He also goes into a lot of detail about the memorial hall development in 2007 and the justification for the carpark that is going to be taken away, plus that it was a condition for the new hall, plus the carparks that are going to be taken away that were built by the people of George Town. There has been no requirements by the George Town Council to ask for new car parking for this new development. They say they are going to formalise some at the back of the new hall but that was provided by the ratepayers for the new hall. They are saying quite clearly they need 90 spaces. Under a normal development they would be asked to provide 90 spaces. In this case, they are taking from the community our spaces, our 90, and reducing our shopping and our spaces for the people who work in our businesses down to 30 spaces for off-street parking where you can park for more than one hour. The rest of the on-street parking close to the CBD is half-hour and less than an hour and outside the supermarket for two hours. The supermarket, Woolworths, or Roelf Vos as it was in those days, was given special dispensation to build because we had that lovely big car park.

We do not want to kill off private enterprise in George Town, we are struggling, like all small towns, to maintain our CBD. I'm conscious of the time, Mr Chairman, I have included from today's press, an article on the development in Launceston where perhaps a similar situation will arise. The second paragraph says that 'Launceston City Council aldermen unanimously accepted an application of dispensation to alter the council's interim planning scheme'. In the case of George Town, we had it put to us as a council, after it had been knocked out by RMPAT, to set aside our planning scheme. As I think I said last time, somebody could have applied to put a pig farm on that corner and during the TPC hearing, there was no allowance for the process, which is flawed.

I am sure the Launceston council, with this development, will give more respect than three-and-a-half hours of assessment, if you can call it that, before it goes to council. I will finish up here now, Mr Chairman. Because it was awfully rushed, I would ask you to refer to this lease that was drawn up in 1974, it is a hundred-year lease and the council, the planning authority had no idea. I contend, if they had had this lease which says if you allow this building, you lose control of all of your wonderful Regent Square, they would have taken more note and asked more questions. The reason they couldn't ask questions is, they were never, ever, ever given access to their planner.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Graeme. Kim?

Mr BOOTH - When you say they were never given any access to their planner, can you expand on that in regard to the way that this was determined? I would also like to go to the claim from the Pitt & Sherry report with regard to the approval being 'fatally flawed', or the application being 'fatally flawed'.

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Mr NEILSON - The application was probably fatally flawed for all of the reasons that are in there. The process was wrong, besides them not acting as a planning authority, Mr Abernathy goes into considerable detail there explaining - and I'm sure you don't want me to read it but I would ask you to read this - but as a planning authority, the counsellors had never met with the planner but the Deputy Mayor asked the question, 'If we want advice during this process, where is the planner to give us expert advice?' - whom they had not met to that stage. The advice was that the general manager would be giving that advice. I worked under that general manager for three years and I don't believe that he had the qualifications when you had to answer those questions and you had the planner sitting out in her office who had that application. Of course, this is part of why there is a current inquiry into the George Town Council, initially an inquiry into the general manager who has been stood down.

As a counsellor, as my dealings with the general manager and the council, with the donation of land and being a submitter to various hearings, the general manager of the George Town Council is central to the faults of us getting to this position. As a councillor, when it first came to the council for the specified departure, which was proved to be an area undefined and grew each day of the hearing because the footprint wouldn't fit, the councillors were absolutely misled by the general manager. It was under a false pretence that they had to identify a specified departure to rectify the new hall being built outside the plans that were attached to this lease. The councillors weren't shown those plans, they were simply told the building had been placed over the boundary of the building envelope. There were two leases, one with the original hall and the remainder.

I argued unsuccessfully, one of nine, that the proper procedure would be to correct and give retrospective approval to the new hall being built over the boundary and then to look at the specified departure for a possible future development on the remainder of that south-west corner. But, at the insistence of the general manager, erroneously, and I say deceitfully, councillors were told that it had to be made under the banner of one decision. That's where the problem started. If it could have been a retrospective approval for the new hall and then you would look at the second part, at least some of the councillors who have been loud and central to saying that they didn't want it there - but they were simply misled. I won't go into all the other details along the line where the general manager has erred in this, but one of them is very central to the alternative sites.

The community asked for a decision on alternative sites, the council asked the general manager to prepare the alternative sites, but those alternative sites were not produced until 10 months later. It was at the AGM in December, the council said in January, 'General manager, please provide alternative sites'. He produced them in October. It was, I would say, a rather biased report because all it did was take the footprint of this hub and try to plonk it on the alternative sites without any attempt to twist it east-west or to alter the footprint. I could go on for a long while.

While the council, and in particular the general manager, is being investigated for some rather serious complaints in, let me say, enforcing his view on staff and councillors, I think it would be most improper for a decision to be made because we could come to a point in time where a Public Works Committee can make a decision that overriding that will be a rather embarrassing report that shows, probably not in the Workplace [?]Tasmania hearing, but the hearing that will inevitably come from the director - and I

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have spoken with the director along with a lot of others - that will be able to assist this process. In the words of the Director of the Local Government, there are many, many things wrong with the George Town Council and these things that have been highlighted, in particular the actions of the general manager, it is Regent Square and the approval process that has galvanised the community and galvanised the staff to speak out about how things went horribly wrong.

CHAIR - Before you go ahead, Kim, I have allowed some latitude there, Graeme, in allowing you to explain the context.

Mr NEILSON - I appreciate that.

CHAIR - I was a little cautious about allowing that to be too free-ranging, but that said, you were going to the matters that Kim had raised with you about councillors' interaction with the planner so the councillors could be well-informed. We will just proceed, but we won't be going down the path about council staff interaction. We can familiarise ourselves with all of the detail around that from the TPC hearing and from other investigations that we can conduct.

Mr BOOTH - I was seeking to clarify there, you are saying that the councillors themselves were denied access to expert planning advice because they were not able to speak to the planner at that meeting when they approved it, but that the general manager, effectively, acted as a ventriloquist, if you like, for the planner?

Mr NEILSON - Absolutely. There are two things there really, Kim. The general manager signed off that the expert advice would be from somebody who was qualified to do so and that was denied to council. I believe, in speaking to some councillors, they had never ever met the planner, let alone been briefed or workshopped. It was impossible to workshop this because it came to the council at 8.30 the day after the Launceston Show, and three-and-a-half hours later supposedly this whole project was assessed and written up in the agenda ready to go out to councillors. They only had the weekend and two days to read it. They asked for extra time, which was denied by -

CHAIR - I will just interrupt there. We are revisiting information that we already have on the public record and will go back to that if we need to.

Mr NEILSON - Thank you.

If I could just answer the second part of Kim's question. He asked me whether councillors acting as planning authority had made up their mind. I have absolute proof of that. I was in the presence of one councillor asking him to consider declaring a pecuniary interest in deciding on that site where the hub is proposed because the alternative site, which the minister had said they were assessing in tandem, he had indicated to our family on more than one occasion that he was interested in purchasing that property if it was still available. So I saw it as a clear pecuniary interest but while I was talking to him about that he took a call which was quite audible to me, from another councillor who was doing the ring-around and had said to him, 'You must vote for this because ...' and he mentioned - is it all right for me to mention the councillor's name?

Mr BOOTH - It is a public hearing, you are under oath.

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CHAIR - Well, it is a conversation that you had so you are at liberty to mention the details of the conversation so long as it is relevant to our hearing.

Mr NEILSON - I was in his company, in his house, Councillor Parish. He took a call from Councillor Heather Barwick, who quite audibly said, 'Tim, you must vote for this because Councillor O'Sign said that it is no different and you must vote for it because everything is absolutely correct.' Councillor O'Sign held a position within council for most of his working life as the building surveyor, and so by that, amongst some of the councillors who perhaps didn't do their own homework or weren't able to do their own homework, the inference is that if Councillor O'Sign, with his years of experience as a building surveyor, says everything is all right it must be so, but I certainly dispute that. What I do not like is that the absolute collusion between councillors to vote - and we have all had enough experience and seen some awful incidents.

When it came to the council acting as a planning authority, those three people were very key. Mr Parish talked about the need for a family centre, nothing to do with planning; Councillor O'Sign said quite clearly that it was the government's land and they should be able to put on it what they want, which certainly isn't the reality of the situation. Councillor Barwick moved a procedural motion that the matter be put so the debate was stifled. That may be irrelevant if you accept my contention that they were not even acting as planning authority, which quite clearly in my mind and on some advice I have got, they weren't. They had gone out of acting as a planning authority. I have taken particular note at council meetings since and as recently as last meeting the mayor sat where you are, Mr Harriss, and there was nothing in section 6. He said section 6 referred to - I think it is section 65 that it is read out - and said, 'I believe there is nothing in this section, we are now moving on to section 7'.

CHAIR - Is that last council meeting relevant to the project which we are considering today?
I suspect not.

Mr NEILSON - Only to say how things have always worked in all the time I have been on council. Section 6 is a planning authority, section 7 is matter to do with the planner, where you get reports and so forth. It was questioned by the deputy mayor at the next meeting and it was quite clear, and made by quite clear by the general manager, that council cannot and should not act as a planning authority under section 7. It must be under section 6 when they formally move in as a planning authority.

Mr BOOTH - So the relevance of this is that you are asserting that the decision made by council was not lawful?

Mr NEILSON - Absolutely.

Mr BOOTH - Why are you so passionate about this? You have been a councillor and landowner here but you are very passionate. What's the reason for your passion?

Mr NEILSON - I could speak about my firm belief in democracy, being the son of somebody who served five years in Borneo and a son-in-law of somebody who languished for three-and-a-half years in Changi. I'm passionate about democracy and this whole matter has absolutely gone against the democratic process. I'm passionate to

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the extent that I spoke up as a councillor on day one as one against eight who had been misled, which I have alluded to. As a family, at great cost to us because we are not wealthy people, we offered, without any recognition for six months - but I think there was a bit of dirty work behind that - to try to solve the situation. This has consumed our lives. We've spent so much time researching, getting expert advice - my family isn't the only one that has spent thousands of dollars getting expert advice. Right up until this point in time, we have been absolutely, as a group and as part of the community, denied proper process.

CHAIR - Can I interrupt there? That takes us continually down that path of the process that the council applied and which was subsequently tested to some extent in the TPC. It's not the role of this committee to audit or second-guess the previous processes that have occurred. If they were inappropriate or illegal, that's for another process. We have to confine our consideration to the project as presented. The evidence we took last time we were here, and much of which you're sharing with us today, is informative so we understand what process the council has been pursuing. However, if there was anything improper that the council embarked upon during its consideration of the project, it's not our role to audit what it has done. I am going to be firm about that in terms of this committee's consideration and our remit under the law to consider the project in front of us.

Mr BOOTH - If there was proof that the approval process had been unlawful, I think it would be relevant for this committee to determine whether it was appropriate to spend public funds on it, but we would have to have more than an assertion.

Mr NEILSON - I stand by my contention absolutely, Mr Booth. I can produce what evidence I have in that regard.

Mr BOOTH - Perhaps, Chair, it might be appropriate, if Mr Neilson feels he has proof that the process was unlawful, that he provide that to the committee to have a look at it.

Mr NEILSON - That's the process or acting as a planning authority?

Mr BOOTH - Any matter you consider was relevant to whether the approval was lawful or not.

Mr NEILSON - Further evidence from MLC member - I appreciate the help we have had from Mr Dean. He has asked questions on the Floor of the Legislative Council. I don't believe the work of the MLCs stops in the Chamber. He has been misled there. He has attempted to do a lot of work outside by getting all the groups together but the support group and the proponents haven't taken part in what he has been doing to try to find a solution. More importantly, members, he has reported and would have liked to have raised this at the AGM, but he was unable to be there. He has written to every councillor and said that his correspondence in regard to Regent Square has been ignored by the council. He has not received responses from the mayor or the general manger. I believe that is very, very serious in that we have an independent MLC who is seeking information and is totally ignored. That is a breakdown of our process.

The next point: the possible section 64 action - this is an option open to us, but I think I said before we were reluctant because we have to put \$15 000 down on the table pretty

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well first of all. This is in relation to the completion of a condition for the new hall. The last two things there, the rejection of the proposal and the current investigation, I mentioned that.

Finally, I put to the committee that this is an unsuitable project. It's not meeting the needs that were intended. There has been, from my investigation, no review from the original plans and concept going back to Mr Bartlett's time. I know quite a few people are making comment on this. It's a waste of money in following a dream that hasn't been fully assessed. There are other hubs and there are other child and family centres where they are saying if they built them again they would make some changes. I can't see where this plan has changed. I have had a second look at the East Devonport Child and Family Centre and clearly its success is because it is next to a school.

At 10 o'clock two Fridays ago I went in there and there were 25 or 26 parents and two children. I said, 'Where are the children?' 'They're next-door at the school. That's one of the successes,' they said. They were over there doing some pre-school work and co-operation. The mothers and the one dad were undergoing certain training and having some valuable time, and there are other things there that they could access. Being a couple of blocks away from the small shopping centre at East Devonport was seen as an advantage so you could get to a shop. Here, it seems to me, the main advantage that they are saying is it's next to the shop. They are ignoring where the people who are going to use it are coming from. We even heard this bus story that was unbelievable.

I put it to you that it's not good value for taxpayers' money. It's a duplication and I will table this document which sets out the many things at our wonderful hospital and community centre. Why we are duplicating, I don't know. This has the potential to destroy our central business district. Without parking, and I wish Mr Brooks was here because he has been front and central, according to the press in Devonport, talking about parking and its effect on shopping. I put it to this committee that you should be rejecting this. In rejecting it you are going to make it go ahead in the right place, after community consultation, proper planning process and a proper assessment of all the alternative sites and a proper planning process.

The community can be brought together by this. We don't have to lose parking. We don't have to lose the viability.

CHAIR - Graeme, I will have to interrupt because we are going over a lot of old ground that you have already covered.

Mr NEILSON - Thank you.

CHAIR - I understand the passion and emotion, but it's important to be fair to other people who have committed to come along. Are there any other questions? Thanks, Graeme.

Mr NEILSON - Thanks very much.

CHAIR - We will take that other document as a tabled document, thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr GERALD O'DOHERTY WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED; AND Ms BRENDA GUNST WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Thank you both for coming along today. Brenda, I want to reiterate that having taken the oath and appearing before a parliamentary committee you are protected by parliamentary privilege while in front of this committee. We always indicate to people that it is important to be aware of that and that when you leave the table you do not have that protection of parliamentary privilege. If you are invited to or choose to speak to the media, you need to be careful about what you say because action may be brought by anybody if they feel aggrieved or feel you have broken the law. Nonetheless, it is important to provide that backdrop. Gerald, we will start with you.

Mr O'DOHERTY - I do not really know where to start, after about four years. Regarding a comment made just before the end of Mr Neilson's evidence, with all due respect I would like to point out something. I did have a submission into the last TPC hearing this year. Graeme was talking about process and procedural matters being tested to some extent by the TPC - no, they were not because I was present. Also, it had contact with Mr Ramsay and got a letter just before the start of that hearing in regard to calling witnesses and the procedures of how to do that.

Why I wanted to do that was because of procedural and process issues that had taken place previously with council in regard to the issue, and other issues. Mr Turner from the DPP drew to the chair's attention that he was not hear about procedural matters and what had taken place before the 43A planning amendment had come forward. We did not get any opportunity. In this community, and somewhat I think with councillors and some members of the public gallery, they seem to think this was tested by the TPC on those matters. No, it was not. We were not allowed to go there as evidence, even with these issues may have been brought up. We were told it would not be assessed. The chairman said words to the effect that they had a rather small brief and that was in regard to the planning technicality, or the 43A amendment that was in front of them, for that day. Whatever else had taken place with council procedure or any other planning approvals or process - they were not there to discuss them; so we did not get a hearing.

I think processes and procedures are very important. This has gone on for four years and I do not believe all the processes on this particular project have been followed, I would say, to a good standard. I think it has all been pretty wishy-washy. I have major concerns. It has caused some division in our community which we do not need, and it has gone on and on. As you may well know, there has been lots of stuff in the media about this. Probably how I see it is that I really do wish that people, whether they are on the council, whether they are bureaucrats from the education department, whether they are general members of the public or people from the CFC Parents and Friends - I just wish everyone would look at this procedures because I do not believe that anything goes just to get what you want.

I think people should be concerned that in our state, in our community, the procedures are followed properly and none of this using your political sway or the fact that you have high-paid public servants to stand over - if they so wish with their professionalism - people in communities that are just average everyday people who are not being paid to

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do all of this. I think people should be really concerned because I understand that certain people want certain things out of this. Fine. Next time it might be something you do not want. Then the procedures are not really good and I assume people will kick up if it is not going their way.

I thought it was very important to point that out. I really am exasperated that over these last few years there was an original TPC hearing a few years ago where they were making an attempted amendment to the zoning - I have forgotten the word; it has gone out of my head. At that original TPC, the people who were involved with the state and our council were advised that if the intention was to go ahead and put a planning application in for a hub, it would not be good advice to do that. Because of the zoning of the land, it was not legally appropriate to put health and education services on that zoning. If you talk about the TPC this year, well, approximately about three years ago they advised the parties involved not to do that.

They totally ignored that advice of the TPC. There was an application that went in somewhere within that next 12 months. That ended up with RMPAT, Resource Planning and Appeals Tribunal, and took place in 2011. The decision was handed down in March 2012 and that hearing found exactly what the TPC advice that had been given - it was illegal on that zoning to have health and education services. I just wonder about some of the people involved with this process who are involved with the government and our council. They had that strong advice not to go there; they totally ignored it and did not have consultation with our wider community. They might have had consultation with the immediate groups, but not the wider community. I just wonder why they would ignore that advice. You have people saying about the last TPC decision that was handed down this year, 'That's a process. Why don't you listen to it?'

What I say is, 'Why didn't council and the government listen to the first TPC process instead of wasting ratepayers' and taxpayers' money, putting in an application that they knew was not legal'. I do not know whether they thought because the powers that be - the state government - wanted this, they would tread over the people in our community who had questions about it. Maybe that is how it appears to me - bullying.

So RAMPAT found it was illegal - that is the second time round. People in this community did get behind putting a case to that. It cost a lot of individual members of the community approximately \$15 000 out of their own pockets to mount this case. Second time round we won the case; it was illegal to put the building on that zone. So what do they do? Instead of listening to our community and the concerns where there was evidence - I have put it in my submission. There were of lots of examples of petitions, one of which was tabled on 10 March 2010 with 719 signatures; another one with 440 signatures; another petition following in 2011 with 443 signatures - all to do with this subject. Then in May 2012, a petition containing 1 788 signatures was tabled in the Legislative Council. Continuing from 2010, 2011, 2012, I think it is highly significant in a community like ours with the town and the outlying regions of the whole municipality, a population of approximately 6 600 people. I would say even if you had a petition tabled at Hobart or Sydney City Council with nearly 2 000 signatures, they would pay attention in those big centres. So I think that is significant for this community.

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As it goes on with two cases - TPC advised not to do it; with RMPAT the case was won by community members with massive support of the majority of the community in regard to the fact they did not want the building on Regent Square which is now heritage-listed. It did not stop there. I wonder about the competency of the people dealing with this. They were very anxious to railroad it through, to say there are only a few people against it, to totally ignore all the petitions, all the evidence and the public meetings,. At a public meeting over 90 per cent of people voted for a motion about not putting a building there and expressing concerns about the building on the square - the petition with 1 788 signatures. It is from one year to the next - 2010, 2011 and 2012, and it goes on. Without a doubt, at meetings, votes or when you are taking up a petition, you get at least 90 per cent of people who want to sign it.

Mr BOOTH - Do you think this would be an appropriate use of public money - to build on the Regent Square?

Mr O'DOHERTY - Absolutely. I suppose after three years or four years I am probably going on about why I am here and how I feel about it, but I will get down to that. I think it is an inappropriate use of public money.

Mr BOOTH - For the record, I actually asked whether it was an appropriate use.

Mr O'DOHERTY - I do not think it is an appropriate use of public money. No, I don't think it is; that is my personal point view.

I think the adults in this room are wise enough to know that if you look at this process over this period of years, if there was nothing wrong with the process, if there was nothing wrong with putting the building there, it probably would have been built long ago. We would not have had a TPC hearing, a RMPAT hearing, another TPC hearing and we would not be sitting here now at a Works Committee hearing. I assume people would not have been interested. So I think that probably shows there have been ongoing concerns. The process, as far as I am concerned, should have had wider consultation with the whole of our community instead of specific user groups. We should have all been stakeholders because Regent Square is our community park; it is our main park and recreation area. It has been there for 200 years. I think we are stakeholders because of the fact there is that 100-year lease on it. As soon as people decided they wanted to not go to the original site, which I believe was at Dalrymple, when people started looking at other sites and came to the community park, we should have all been widely consulted. That did not take place.

I will go back to Mr Booth's question - value for money. I have a major concern about \$6.9 million being spent on a hub. If people are honest and fair, a lot of people are proud of the fact that for a small community we have very good services, whether it is a Service Tasmania space, or the counter space in these council chambers. They are very modern and accessible, including the community health services that are offered out of our hospital. It has been there probably for about five years.

There used to be hospital there which then became George Town Hospital and Health Community Centre. At the time I took some interest in that and was totally behind that project. I thought it was absolutely magic. I am fairly sure it was an \$18 million project at the time, which is a big spend for a community such as this. It is a brilliant facility.

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We were told at the time about spending that sort of money and making it a hospital and community centre to incorporate the meeting rooms and consulting rooms and all the services that operate out there. That is a modern facility. We had approximately a \$3.5 million upgrade in 2008 to the memorial hall on Regent Square - an upgrade to the library; they got a new online centre.

CHAIR - Gerald, I am going to interrupt to bring it back to this specific project. As I indicated to you at the first hearing, the committee is constrained by law to consider a project that is before us. We are required to take into consideration the stated purpose of the project and then to further address our minds to the necessity or advisability of the project proceeding and the present and prospective public value of the work. I have allowed some latitude for context with other projects around the town that you have referred to.

I allowed a fair amount of latitude at the commencement of your presentation around the journey that everybody has been on with process; but we are not here to audit that process. I allowed that to go because it helped you form your continuing presentation and I thought it courteous to extend you that opportunity. But that is our remit so if you could confine the rest of your presentation, please, to matters related to the stated purpose of the project, the necessity or advisability of it proceeding as you see, and then the present and prospective value of the work to this town or to the region.

Mr O'DOHERTY - Thank you. On those new and modern services - I will continue from there and jump to where I should be. I just think there is unnecessary duplication, with a lot of already very good, modern facilities with services in them. I do not think it is money well spent where there is a duplication of perfectly good services - whether it be services that operate out of the counter-space in this chamber, from the modern hospital, or from the upgraded facilities at the memorial hall. I think there is unnecessary duplication. So I do not think it is value for money or sensibly spent money. You would think that if there was going to be a spend like that in a town, most people would jump in and be behind if they thought it was well spent money - like the hospital that I think we all supported. I do not think that is value for money and I seriously question whether it should go ahead because you wonder what happens with these places that are vacated.

Mr BOOTH - If you do not mind me interrupting, is that a concern you have about duplication - that if it is to proceed then other buildings would become potentially redundant?

Mr O'DOHERTY - They obviously will. They are up and running and modern so why would you interfere with that? Yes, I do have a concern about that. We have enough buildings lying idle all around our community now. For instance, a large section of the building we are in now - the former Magistrates court - is totally under-utilised - all of that side of the building. That is one major example. I think that there is under-utilisation of some premises now, so why have more vacant premises - ones that are quite modern and appropriate at this moment?

Mr BOOTH - We have had evidence that people generally are happy that they want a child and family centre but not the hub concept. So, would it be your opinion then that there is a need for a CFC and if so, whether this would be an appropriate site or whether there are other places that would be more appropriate?

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Mr O'DOHERTY - I have made no bones about it from day one. , I am totally in support of the CFC in this community and I cannot remember anybody I have spoken to who is not. It seems that one aspect of the project, the hub, has massive community. Yes, I am absolutely behind having a modern CFC in this town but not on that site. I will probably enlarge on that while you are here. There is something I might have mentioned in my submission but I do not know whether you can deal with it or not. In regard to the CFC, I think it is pretty clear with the minutes of a meeting of theirs on 30 August 2012, where they were assessing two sites - the one that was being donated by the Nelson family just along here on Anne Street and Regent square - I will table a document in a minute, if that is okay - it was pretty clear that even though there were ones who voted for Regent Square and there were three votes for the one up the road, all of them voted to have a stand-alone child and family centre. All of them. That is what they wanted.

Yes, I support that, but not on that site. I have a concern that I put in my submission. It is a shame - I don't know whether I can quote it. Did you all read my submission?

Mr BOOTH - In summary, are you saying that to construct a hub, notwithstanding where it was constructed, would not be appropriate? In fact you need a CFC, which is a discrete entity in its own right in an appropriate location - but not a hub. Is that what you are saying?

Mr O'DOHERTY - I think that would be better, and on another site; like all those people voted for - a stand-alone. Like, Mr Neilson, I have checked out the East Devonport one that is near the East Devonport School. It seems quite a nice workable building and the people there seem to be happy about the fact that it is stand-alone. I think the shame here is where there has been this thing, which I call emotional blackmail. I have had it said to me on the site a couple of years ago by a minister involved, 'If it doesn't go on this site, it will go to Sorell'.

I have had discussions about that type of statement with Minister McKim personally on this site with four other people. I have had discussions in regard to that issue with Minister O'Byrne on that site. There have been references to the previous minister, Thorp, where she was alluding to that. I notice that she was in the seat of Sorell in the past. I have a concern that even people from the CFC have had to bow down a bit because I have had someone from their committee even say it to me, 'If you want it to stand alone and you voted on their minutes that they wanted a stand-alone, why are you going along with the hub thing on Regent Square?'. It was simply said to me, 'We are scared that if we don't, we will lose the whole project to Sorell'. I have a concern about that whole thing of what I would say is like emotional blackmail.

If the professional people involved seriously think we need the services in this town - if they really believed that, what difference would it make if those services were around the corner on another block? This business of 'If it doesn't go there, you may lose it to Sorell' would mean these people are not fair dinkum. If we needed these services that badly and they were genuine about it, they would put it around the corner, and not use this emotional blackmail of Sorell. I think it is unforgivable. Can I just table that document?

CHAIR - Yes, certainly.

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Mr O'DOHERTY - It highlights what I am talking about that meeting. While I'm at it, I would like to table another document while Mr Donnelly is there and then I will talk about that in a minute. That document is just about alternate sites. This was touched on earlier and I've just tabled a copy of the alternate sites, which our management are directed to do. It was sent to Mr Andrew Finch, Secretary of the Department of Education. It took 10 months for that to be produced out of our council. That image of the building, for want of a better word, is just whacked over the top of other sites. I just wonder, when there was a direction given about alternate sites, why it took 10 months for our general manager to send this to Mr Finch. I think during that time maybe a lot of stuff was happening and maybe the other the sites may have been assessed. But a 10-month hold-up? Well, I wonder what was going on there. I have tabled the document and I won't go on about it. I think the panel members should have a look at what we have been talking about. Mr Nelson spoke about it earlier.

I know Mr Nelson earlier tabled a little booklet. One has just gone up there but there is another booklet that has been in our town for years and years. It is a What? Where? When? book that tells you where everything is. I might even table that so you can look at the current one for 2012-13. I have bookmarked a couple of things in it about services that are offered by Neighbourhood House, The Wattle Group, and the services that operate out of our hospital currently.

There is some debate about what does or does not operate. I think a lot of these centres that are in this book have a government logo. These ads are paid for and put in by the government. Maybe I should have done that earlier; it should be tabled and these services should be looked at that are readily available in our town. I get the impression that people are trying to undermine the amount of services here to get what they want. I will leave that there for tabling and I will move on.

I do not know whether it is fit-for-purpose in regard to the location. As I have said in my submission, I would suggest that the hub and all its intended services are not socially compatible. The Memorial Hall Complex which has the ability to host large-scale events has, for example, a supper room and bar facility which can take up to 50 people. The Memorial Hall caters for 250 people and the Graham Fairless up to 500 people. So I think hub development probably is not fit-for-purpose, being a joined to those buildings.

I do not think it is completely compatible with the Memorial Hall Complex because the Memorial Hall Complex is available all year around to be hired out for large or small scale events. I do not want to single anyone out here but, who knows what these events may be and who the people may be hiring the hall. That is endless about who can hire these facilities with these capacities for hundreds of people. I think it makes it not so fit-for-purpose having it right next to these buildings that can be hired out for everything and anything all year round.

Mr BOOTH - What effect would that have on parking?

Mr O'DOHERTY - I will give you an example, I was going to talk about some stuff in the Pitt and Sherry report. Graham has already presented that, so now I won't waste a lot of time on that. I have a really serious concern about our CBD parking and I will give you a fine example of that. Only in this last week, we happened to have what they call

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'George Town on Show' - you may have seen it in the media. It is a great thing to promote our town.

On the Thursday in the north here, we had a rough day - a rather windy, rainy, horrible day. At about 2 o'clock that afternoon I proceeded to go to a bread shop just down on the main street opposite the hall. At that time, I could not get a park. All the angle parking was full; the western carpark, the eastern car park plus the main street parking. I went around the corner to the Woolworths supermarket. I am thinking, 'This is amazing; I am having trouble getting a park'. I came up the street, parked a long way from where I wanted to be. I was fit enough to go to the shops but it had been raining pretty heavily and I wanted to get some bread.

What was going on that day was that there was a seniors' concert in the Memorial Hall complex. Then there were some schools having a dance in the Graham Fairless Centre next door. Hence on the gravel patch that is suppose to be the carparking for the extension to the Memorial Hall - the current one - there were buses and cars on there. Later I drove around and parked there to talk to somebody. So just this Thursday past with two, I would say, average-size events taking place in those facilities, our CBD parking was absolutely jam-packed.

I said I wish I had had my camera and I believe there are people in the gallery who independently of me took photos of that. So that is two not really major events and we are having serious trouble with our CBD parking. Down the road to where the Pier Hotel is, there were cars parked down there.

CHAIR - Gerald, I am going to interrupt because you are giving a lot of detail. I think the committee does have the message of your concern about the parking. In the interests of everything which the committee has in front of it today, I will ask you to be precise because we do have that strong message from not only yourself but others as to the parking. Greg, had a question while on that area for the moment.

Mr HALL - Thank you, Chair. I think Gerald could answer the question with respect to that function. The question I had was how many functions are there normally in a given year? Are they once a month that you are talking about in terms of these sorts of functions, or are they weekly, or do they vary quite a bit?

Mr O'DOHERTY - It is probably varied and I do know the council has a hall manager. Well I suppose it is enough to have a hall manager. There is a report in the monthly council agendas about the usage. I think there are things that are happening there from week to week or from month to month. I know a lot of people question whether the new extension on the hall gets enough use for the outlay that they put into it.

Greg, the other thing is it is not just those events that take place in those facilities, it is the events that take place on Regent Square. We have over the years and through the year. One prime example is Targa which is a major event in our town. I do not know whether any you have come to that over the years but you would know that you cannot fit on that park or square anywhere. There are cars and people all over it and it is always used for hosting the event for all the cars that come there. There are lots of other events over the years that have happened there. It is not just the use of the internal facilities, it is the use of the park itself where they have a lot of outdoor stuff.

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Mr HALL - Thank you.

Mr O'DOHERTY - I will wind up on the parking. I think you already have evidence there that the intention would be that if this goes ahead, whether the people like it or not, you have all the paperwork there to show you that basically council have agreed to take 90 CBD parking spaces. You have all the evidence there of that. So it is 90 parking spaces. You also, I believe, have a 2007 document. I think that was in the Pitt and Sherry report so I will not go on about that, where the new extension to the hall was suppose to have 120 car spaces. That is part of why there was \$98 000-odd spent already on that hard gravel section. That was supposed to be parking for the new extension to the hall. There was \$98 000 spent on it and now they're going to put a building on it and we don't get our parking completed - another waste of money.

Mr BOOTH - I would like to get some clarity there. You are saying that because of these random events that occur - although they occur quite often during the year - there wouldn't be sufficient parking there for people going to CFC on those days?

Mr O'DOHERTY - That is obviously going to be a problem for people whether they're going to the CFC or any other services in the hub or people who are just going to use our shops in the CBD.

Mr BOOTH - Would there be other places that you are aware of in George Town where a CFC could be built as a discrete entity that would not suffer the same issue with regard to random events - a festival or something - that took up all the parking?

Mr O'DOHERTY - I listened to a gentleman here on the last day of the hearing. I know it's been mentioned before and I even had it mentioned to me by the general manager of the council in the past that he thought the site was okay - that is the former YMCA community centre site.

Mr BOOTH - But there would be other sites that wouldn't have that issue with parking compatibility?

Mr O'DOHERTY - There would be, and I think a fine example is just past the hospital doctors' surgery, the site that has been offered free of conditions and charge from the Neilson family. It gets a bit confusing; they have altered the site several times this year.

Mr BOOTH - If I was built somewhere else, people who attend the CFC would have unfettered access 364 days a year?

Mr O'DOHERTY - They absolutely would because that site on Anne Street, for example, is bigger than the other site. If it were stand-alone, they would have unfettered access and it could end up being pretty good. I know people might not agree with me about that. I understand there are local people here who are very passionate about the CFC, and so they should be. If I was on their committee I would be. But at the same time they could have a good functioning, modern CFC and there are other sites available.

Mr BOOTH - In regard to compatibility, you raised the point that there may be some uses of the hall that might be inappropriate next to a CFC. Do you believe it's potentially an

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improper use of public money, or not a good use of public money, to build something that might fetter other uses? Do you think the CFC in itself may fetter some uses potentially that currently exist on Regent Square, and vice versa? Do you think the presence of the cohort that uses the CFC - children and so forth - might fetter the other uses of the hall, such a Targa for example? Is it appropriate to have children in a CFC on a regular basis in a place where you might end up with 100 cars parked around?

Mr O'DOHERTY - I don't know. I think that it could create some problems, but obviously not all the time. There are going to be times - and we are talking from one year to the next - where that problem could arise on several occasions throughout the year. I would have a concern about that, and I think everybody should. '

Did I table a SIPs report? I would like to table this report and I won't go on about it because I do know that some people touched on this. I think maybe Mr Cox did on a previous day. The SIPS report is a government report that has some details about the demographic. It has some nice coloured, detailed maps in regard to our community. It was a report that would have been put out in relation to this project a couple of years back. It has some really good detailed mapping and basically it would show you the demography of our residential areas. I have a concern also that this building, though it may be reasonably central to our CBD, is not central to the residents who would use it. It doesn't matter whether you go - and it will show you in here whether you go to a north-east direction, or an east direction, or a south direction in our town, they are the main residential areas.

This hub, regardless of which one of those main residential areas you go to, is at least a kilometre away, and more in cases. But it is at least a kilometre from all those main residential areas. I did hear a question being asked here at the last hearing when there were three people I understood to be from the education department sitting up here and Mr Heath Clayton, from ARTAS. They were asked about what would be an expected normal walking distance. I was a little bit surprised none of them knew because some of them were present at the Tas Planning Commission this year where it was stated by a planner - I think his name was Mr Matthew Clark. He was asked by a commissioner what would be the accepted standard of a reasonable walking distance - a maximum. I asked people who were in the room and it was clearly talked about several times and it was 800 metres. All of these main areas this building would be servicing are well over 800 metres.

CHAIR - Again, Gerald, I will bring you back because you have mentioned that. The committee is conscious of the evidence you have given. I don't want to be disrespectful, but that message is very loudly communicated to the committee, not only today from your evidence, but previous witnesses. Can I ask you to wrap up your presentation and then we will see if there are any other questions.

Mr O'DOHERTY - Yes, because on the last day nobody did state that the accepted practice is 800 metres, I thought I would reiterate that. I will put that there for tabling, if someone could take it. I will just look through my notes here to see if there is anything else that I wish to touch on.

CHAIR - Bearing in mind that as you do that, we have read your submissions. We have had all the submissions for some time. I have it in front of me.

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Mr O'DOHERTY - I know that. I will say this and I don't want to put the lady on the spot, but when we had a TPC hearing not so many months ago, there was a lady giving evidence. I will name her; I don't want to embarrass her and I'm sure she will agree with me. She was a lady named Cheryl Larcombe. When I asked a question in regard to - and I can pull all the notes out here and I know they did record the TPC hearing - it was in relation to how some of us would have the same peace of mind as me about the fact that maybe there was not a public licence because there wasn't consultation with the wider community. In reference to some of that Cheryl Larcombe happened to say that in retrospect if we had to do this again, in her opinion, we would have wider consultation with the community.

I would say to you that I would hope that you do find against this because I think there are a lot of flaws in what has happened. I do not want to give you advice, but I wanted to ask earlier today, 'What is the process to call witnesses in regard to this hearing?'. In my opinion, I would be hoping, you can only give an opinion and maybe you could tell me so I do not go away wondering about it. I think some of the ongoing things I have heard on the last day of this hearing - things I am not going to broach on today because a previous speaker did, but I just wonder about the fact of stuff about the planner and how this was handled. I wonder about the process where I contend that council were not standing as a planning committee. I did have a document here but I will just go off the top of my head. Council were not standing as a planing committee -

CHAIR - I will have to interrupt you again because we are going into matters related to the planning processes which were undertaken. We will take that under consideration. We are not here to audit what the council did and how the TPC dealt with it and how RMPAT dealt with it. We will make some considerations about that in terms of our responsibility under the law, as I have stated a couple of times, to consider the project and its stated purpose and the like. If there has been improper process or unlawful activity, that can be tested. But as Kim has rightly said, we are not about to make a decision in a vacuum where there may have been other processes which are yet to be tested. As to your question as to what the committee might do in terms of calling other witnesses, we have had some conversations about that previously and we will yet have some conversations as to whether we feel we need to have other people in front of the committee.

Mr O'DOHERTY - I totally respect that because I understand what you are saying. But going that step further is what Kim said earlier. If it was looked at closely, I think there have been unlawful processes.

CHAIR - I will consider that.

Mr O'DOHERTY - I am hoping that you do. As far as I am concerned, without pulling all of these documents out of here and going through a whole ramble, I would hope when that is looked at, that people like the general manager, like the planner concerned and like the Deputy Mayor who questioned the process on those occasions - I would hope to determine whether it has all been lawful. I would hope they would be called as witnesses and we might get to the bottom of some of this stuff.

CHAIR - Thank you, Gerald. We will move onto Brenda, thank you.

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Mr O'DOHERTY - Thank you, Mr Chairman and the committee or the panel.

Ms GUNST - Thank you, Paul. I am wary that I am standing on a minefield because I am trying not to repeat things that have already been said. I have a submission that should not take more than say, 10 to 15 minutes at the very most.

Regent Square has become a very emotional issue causing major conflict in George Town's small community and the process to heal it will not be easy. The Education Department in their summary of public consultation failed to mention that the wider community was not included in discussions about this development in the earlier stages. They did mention that when the wider community heard about the plan, they were not in agreement, their concerns were not heard and there was no attempt to modify or adjust the plans. So these people feel disenfranchised; voting was against the enormous public building at public meetings and petitions were ignored. Consultation was with a limited number of people with vested interest in the building on this site.

I think it is relevant to mention that there is some difficulty in our council. Since the parliamentary committee last met in George Town, the general manager has been stood down and there is no real information about the reasons. The council AGM was held on Monday 19 November and the annual report had no mention about the Regent Square hub development at all or the negative impact that this had on the community. This is extraordinary as so much time, money and discussion has gone into this issue over almost four years, and especially in the last year. At this meeting there was, for the second year in a row, a vote of no-confidence in the mayor and the general manager and this was carried. I believe council has failed to represent the people of George Town.

My background is as a health professional for more than 50 years. I have worked with small children in three countries and other areas. I may not be considered an expert witness but there are many issues that concern me, especially the future planning. I am wondering if the whole of Regent Square will be covered in buildings. As a midwife in 1968, I was witness to a massive social change. At that time there were many single, pregnant young women near their date of delivery, sitting silent and sad. At that time for a single girl to become pregnant was considered a disgrace not only for the girl but for her whole family, and that family often turned their daughter out. The baby's father often denied involvement or simply disappeared. The young mother, with feelings of guilt and shame, had no income or means of support and no option but to give the baby up for adoption and regret it for years to come. Thankfully, times have changed and today there should be no such judgments.

If the government really has \$7 million to spare in this small town, the whole community should have been put to work to find out the best way to support young families, including single-parent families, and avoid duplication of service and find a suitable place for development. A single parent has so many issues, especially if there is no regular person to assist that parent. For the sake of the emotional development of children, any carer or minder who is engaged should be a person who has some ongoing involvement in caring for the future of the child. A child under five needs emotional stability and social skills to learn how to laugh and giggle before attempting to learn a lot of other things. When left with unfamiliar volunteer a small child has a limited way to express their distress. A single parent has huge responsibility and could easily be

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overwhelmed. If the wider George Town community was included in the planning, ideas could have evolved into plans to ease their situation.

I would like to briefly mention the TPC hearing because there were some amazing statements made there. The architect suggested the parents could cycle to the hub. Did he think this would be safe or possible if parent and child or children cycled on the road or on the cracked, narrow footpaths with overhanging bushes? The town planner stated we could not see the park from our house but could only see trees. Ladies and gentlemen, should you step outside this building and look across the diagonal you will see our house, which is on the heritage register. This is only one small part of why I am here.

The question arises over and over again: why hire lawyers to defend the position of the council and the Education Department instead of seeking to include and negotiate with those who do not support this decision to build on the square but live in this small town? At the TPC hearing, Ms Rayner admitted that when she first presented her information to a group of locals and councillors she was met with anger. Her comment was, 'What could I do?'. It is now obvious that at that stage the decision to build on the square was set in concrete, without the agreement of the people who have to live with this building which is not in keeping with the history of the town by his position or design. Also to manage the upkeep of all the empty areas that will be left if they are included in the hub.

It is true there have been some buildings on the square but mainly to do with whatever sport was being played there and of a temporary nature. The plan of the hub will destroy the streetscape in the most historical area. Regent Square was identified as George Town's most important central open space and has been here for 200 years. It is a place where the people of George Town go for celebrations and gatherings. Monthly there is a market held, so that impacts on parking. Weekly there are two or three exercise groups and that also impacts. There are some sporting that usually happens weekly as well and all of this impacts on parking.

It could still be a vision for the future of George Town that Regent Square could be a place where a child can run, play, and fly a kite without building some fences. Where people can walk among trees and develop this important space as the lungs of the town. The plan of Dr Andreas Kelly could be adopted in the park and properly looked after.

Other sites are available and more appropriate for a CFC or a LINC. I believe most people would support the building, for example closer to a TasTAFE which will be needed to assist parents to develop skills to hold down a suitable job. Consideration is needed to plan how the link hub development can meet future needs of a changing society.

It is clear there will be a need for professional child care workers to relieve the stress of tired parents especially those with limited finances and single parents. Being a parent myself, I know what a relief I felt when I did hand over a child to a partner who could then take over the care and give me a break from time to time. Some of these parents do not have that privilege.

Also, the historical society is a very active and dedicated group in George Town. I am not currently a member of this group. At Low Head every Sunday, the fog horn sounds

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at 12 midday. It is the oldest operational steam fog horn in the world. I think that is right. They are responsible for running three museums on a daily basis, manning them with volunteers 364 days a year. That is an amazing effort and they have done this for years. So, to a major group of the residents in this town, the history of the town is important and they have the interests of the town at heart. They promote major issues that we have to draw tourists in because this is one of Australia's oldest towns and one of the few remaining Macquarie squares. The lack of consideration and involvement towards this group shows great disrespect for them in their considerable efforts.

If elections had been held at the correct time, we would have some different councillors sitting in those seats. There could have been a proper balance about the square at that time. If the Education Department sincerely addressed the concerns of residents in George Town, then an appropriate building would now be operational on a suitable site.

Ignoring objections is not democratic. A petition of 1 700 plus is not an insignificant number. The Education Department claims to have consulted the community. Many sessions were just to provide the information. Questions were not answered or concerns addressed. Putting a legal team against the community is not consultation. Regent Square is valued by residents of George Town for its central open space, and for amusement and enjoyment. It is currently being used in this way and generations have used this space in this way. It is part of George Town's identity. We could have a LINC hub elsewhere and retain our central space. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thanks very much.

Mr HALL - A couple of quick questions to you, Brenda. In your submission you said many people believed that the concept of a LINC hub is flawed, and then you talk about Queenstown and Bridgewater hubs not working well. Could you elaborate a little bit on that? Is that anecdotal evidence?

Ms GUNST - The first part is that I do not believe it is a good idea to include a Centrelink facility with a hub or a child and family centre. Regarding people going to Centrelink, I believe it is their policy that if people are not working then they pressure them to get a job - any job. It may not suit them, but they need to work so they need to go there. Some of these people have their own ideas and concepts and therefore they get angry. There is a potential for violence. I do not see why small children should be exposed to this. There is the potential to do something here with the Centrelink. Service Tasmania also is in this area. Why have that included with a child and family centre? It is working well here.

The evidence from the other sites is better addressed by people who have actually visited and I have listened to their evidence. People who have visited, I believe, would include Peter Cox and Debbie Rainbow. There might be others, including MrsWootton; they have all told me about how the other sites are not working so well.

Mr HALL - Thank you. Just a second question and your words again are from your submission. When you bought your current property at 11 Elizabeth Street 10 years ago 'we were told that the park opposite was never to be built on.' Where did that advice come from? Did that come from the real estate agent or the council at the time?

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Ms GUNST - It came from hearsay from the locals. I have heard it over and over again over the last 10 years from just local people.

Mr HALL - At that stage my presumption is the town hall was already there, so there was some infrastructure.

Ms GUNST - Yes, there is a Memorial Hall and objections were raised for what is called 'the white elephant', which is the extension to the Memorial Hall. They were ignored as well. People did take some effort to stop that building because they felt it could have been designed better and built better elsewhere. With this one, it is clear to me that the building is not going to stop; it is just going to take over the whole park. The positioning of that building cuts off the view of the park from more than half of the site. From the memorial hall right to the western edge, you cannot see a park if that building goes ahead. It just cuts off the view completely.

The potential is that it just can be built on with anything. We can have a Woolworths supermarket, a Coles or whatever, and we lose it. It is our central important open space and the locals value it.

Mr BOOTH - I am interested in terms of the compatibility of the centre. You mentioned that you had experience previously with children or working with children?

Ms GUNST - I have three qualifications in nursing, plus I have qualifications in complementary health. I have worked in Canada with babies - Canada, England and Australia - and parents.

Mr BOOTH - Is it your view - and I do not want to put words in your mouth - I've taken from previous evidence that a CFC hub would potentially bring in compatible groups and cohorts of people together. People attending the child and family centre may, you suggest, potentially be subject to anger from Centrelink clients; is that correct?

Ms GUNST - Yes.

Mr BOOTH - Is it your view then the public money spent on this would not be fit-for-purpose in that the centre would not be as good as it could be if it was built somewhere else as a discrete CFC only - somewhere in a location where you wouldn't be subjected to those potentially incompatible -

Ms GUNST - Sadly, I think it has been poorly considered as to what might suit this town and where it could be put. There are a lot of great people in this town who would be prepared to be involved and see what they could do to help. Many of the older parents are totally aware of the difficulty in raising children and the pressures that are on. In my time as a parent we did not get the backing or the assistance of finance; you had to manage on your own.

At least these days if there is a single parent, they have some assistance financially but there is still the emotional and the physical difficulties in managing two, three, four, five small children on their own, and it is hard. What I would have liked to have seen is more involvement with community members who might volunteer or be employed to somehow give some relief to these parents.

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Mr BOOTH - In other words, at a CFC but not on Regent Square, is that it?

Ms GUNST - The CFC would sound to be a good thing to start with. The parents presumably would want some stress relief which would mean leaving their children in safety while they go and study or work or do something else. In the future, I would believe that there would need to be a link with a childminding centre. I do not know whether it has to be planned like this.

CHAIR - We do not have any further questions, so Brenda and Gerald thank you very much.

Mr O'DOHERTY - Excuse me, Mr Chairman, could you avail me something? There are two very important points. I went through my notes and I want to table another document. I think it is significant because it is an upgrade of my submission.

On Monday night, 18 November, we had an annual general meeting here in this room. It was a packed house because we had the chairs that are in the gallery plus chairs along there, so it was a very packed house. It was in relation to motions I put on my submission to show public opinion in 2011 at the annual general meeting of the council in 2012 where the motions were ignored and never dealt with by council. The motion was put again and I have a copy of it. I will not read it all but this meeting opposed the proposed hub building on Regent Square - that no new building be erected on Regent Square, that the library and online centre remain in the Memorial Hall building, that the child and family centre be located elsewhere but not on Regent Square, that the George Town Council takes steps to ensure the preservation of Regent Square and its heritage values, and that the George Town Council continue the enhancement of Regent Square as a public park and recreation area.

That was just noted; it was never dealt with in 2011 from the outcome of the public meeting. It was noted and not dealt with at last year's AGM. This was put up again and what I found very significant was that on Monday night there were motions put up. Every one of those motions, when the Chairman called the speakers for and against, seemed to get at least some speakers against.

The Chairman or the Mayor at the time, asked if there were any Speakers against this. There were some speakers for them so I spoke for it. He gave a call for Speakers against; it was the only motion on the night where we had no speakers against, at all. I thought the fact that it was a packed house may well be significant and that that is still the sentiment of the community. If I could table that again?

CHAIR - Yes, you can. Thank you.

Mr O'DOHERTY - One other thing that I am highly concerned about was in the *Hansard* from the last day we were here. What I am really concerned about is that it does have something to do with the Minister for Education, Mr McKim, and also Mr Finch who I believe is a Deputy Secretary or Secretary for Education. There were statements that I read on that and at the time I was here I was near shivering down my spine about it because I have had a conversation on this park with three other people, who are all present here, with Mr McKim on the site - and his adviser, Mr Perry. He made statements that are contrary to what Mr Finch is saying that Mr McKim has told him. I

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am highly concerned about this *Hansard*. It undermines my faith and confidence where things are said, such as Mr Adam Brooks asking Mr Finch, 'My question is about the Minister for Education. What is his position on this?' Mr Finch's answer, 'The minister himself would answer that question but obviously he has been supportive of the development in terms of having a new link for the town as part of the hub'. Mr Brooks said, 'Have you discussed it directly with the minister?' Mr Finch said, 'Yes'. Mr Brooks, 'And he has been supportive of this?' Mr Finch said, 'Yes, he is supportive of it'.

In summing up, Mr Brooks said, 'And Minister McKim, as the Minister for Education supports the project as proposed'. Mr Finch, 'Yes'. I have a concern about that because I have spoken to various politicians over these few years - Liberal, Labor, Green -

CHAIR - Gerald, you leave me no option but to yet again intervene. You are quoting to us matters that we heard ourselves. We have the opportunity to revisit the *Hansard*. We will decide whether we hear from Minister McKim or anybody else. You might have some concerns about what you heard at the hearing but it was evidence on oath and we will consider that.

Mr O'DOHERTY - It was, but from my point of view, which you people would not know, I was worried about this. I do not know whether it is telling the truth or not. I think it is important that I was concerned about this because I personally, with three other people, spoke with Minister McKim on the site and around these buildings, and that seems contrary to what he was telling us. That is where you get very mixed up. I heard you saying last time that there was a suggestion you may call Mr McKim. I am hoping that you do and I am wondering whether that is going to happen.

CHAIR - I indicated to you earlier and I have said it again just now that that will be a decision for the committee to consider. At this stage, we thank you both.

Mr O'DOHERTY - Thank you very much for letting me do that.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr JOHN WATTS, Mr DARYL CAMINO AND Mr JOHN AUSTIN WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you, gentlemen. Perhaps if we take it from John first, please.

Mr WATTS - Thank you. Sorry I could not be here for the previous hearing, but I was visiting grandchildren in Western Australia. You have a copy of the original submission that I sent to you prior to that first hearing. There are a few aspects that I would like to go over with regard to that if I have the opportunity. Before I start, can I ask you a couple of questions?

Firstly, when you consider one of these projects, is there an audit or anything done down the track to show whether the project actually provided value or not? Is that a process that happens within government?

CHAIR - There is no set legislative process or requirement because once this committee dispatches its obligations to consider a project and report, whether it be approved or not approved - and they are the only two options we have - another committee of the parliament, the Public Accounts Committee can, if it chooses; but there is no set process to revisit any particular project.

Mr WATTS - Okay. Secondly, with regard to all the financials involved with this project, do you have any other evidence or do you see any other evidence with regard to the ongoing costs of running this centre and all those sorts of things, other than what we have had presented in the various here by the proponents of the project?

CHAIR - You might have been here earlier when I mentioned the remit of the committee under law and for us to consider the stated purpose, the necessity, advisability and the present and prospective public value. That is what we are tasked with doing. We take into consideration in respect to that matter the present and prospective value of the project and clearly we are required to make some judgments about the financial viability and contribution of a project to the state or to a region.

Mr WATTS - I was just wondering if you had any information that we have not seen or had access to with regard to this.

CHAIR - We would not know whether we have or not.

Mr WATTS - Going back to January 2006, and I think Greg was the chairman of the committee which looked at the hospital redevelopment project and everything. All this is detailed in my submission, but the idea was basically - I will just quote:

To provide a contemporary health facility that is adaptable to meet future needs.

It was basically aimed to be a one-stop shop for all medical, health and welfare-related services. That was opened by the then-Health minister, Lara Giddings, on 27 November 2007. The committee that Greg chaired was given a very full understanding of the way that the whole complex would function and they basically agreed with that.

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Ms Giddings opened that in November 2007 and there was evidence by late 2008 that she was starting to dismantle it. Basically I am asking, what went wrong? What were the additional requirements one year on from the opening of that centre that were not available at that centre when it was opened? In other words, I would consider that most of the things which would be in a child and family centre would already be operating there at the hospital.

If there was something missing, did anyone ever consider that that could be incorporated on that same site by building an additional building or restructuring things and not having to go through all this process of developing a child and family centre somewhere else? In other words, we had all of this money spent on a one-stop shop and then it becomes dismantled. Is that good use of public funds? I am certainly not against the child and family centre. I am pretty much like everyone in George Town. It is something that the community needs and will be of value to the community. Like everyone else, it is just the location of them that is a problem with me. I am asking why it was necessary to go down another path which commenced 12 months after the establishment of that whole facility down at the hospital. Are there any questions from anyone on that aspect?

CHAIR - Members will indicate to me if they want to ask questions. So you just keep rolling on and we will interrupt as needed.

Mr WATTS - The second thing that I covered in my submission has probably been well and truly covered by other people. I have read through all of the proceedings that happened on the first day so I am pretty much up to date with all of that. The location to me really is a problem. I believe that it has the potential to disenfranchise a lot of the more socially and financially disadvantaged people within the George Town area. George Town has a lot of public housing and this is a throw back to when we had large industries here, employing many more people than what there are now. I worked all my life through Rio Tinto, both here and in New Zealand, and at one stage they employed something like over 1 300 people and now they are down to less than 600.

So, because of these sorts of things, a lot of housing has become available. Of course, the government rightly moves people into public housing. A lot of the people who have moved to public housing in George Town are moved from other sites. So you have people who are struggling financially and socially. They have been moved away from the people that they went to school with, from their families and all of the social structures that they have had through their life. They come into a town like George Town and there is very little support. There is very little recreational activity here for people in evenings and things like that. There is very little opportunity for single people to meet other people and that sort of thing.

These people are based mainly in the north and north-east of Georgetown which is usually referred to as north George Town. If you wanted to put a site for a child and family centre which gives them easy access, you could not pick a much worse area than Regent Square, unless you put it around at Pipe Clay Bay or Low Head or somewhere like that. Most of these people, do not have their own transport or, if one member of the family is working, there is probably only one car in the family and that is used to get the person to work. So, it is certainly outside the 800 metre - which is the proponents' words

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- 800 metre area where walking is considered a viable proposition. Last time you met here, you heard about the fact that they could use buses. I think that was met with some interest, there being no public buses in George Town. The point I am trying to make here is that, there could be a lot of people disenfranchised by the siting of the CFC in that area. I also wonder, how much representation the people that have been moved into George Town and are in that situation have had right through this process and what acceptability they have had by the people who have been involved with this process all the way through - whether they have had a fair say, and whether they are accepted by the other people. This is something which I think is fairly important.

The next thing I want to get involved in in a bit of detail is the potential for heritage and historic tourism in George Town. This is one of the most important aspects of the future development of our community here. To do anything to have a relatively serious impact on that is detrimental to George Town's future. I am involved with the Low Head Pilot Station Museum and over the last few years I would have spoken at length to several thousand tourists. The reason they visit that place out there is because it is a museum. We get approximately 7 000 visitors a year. They love the area when they get here. It has remarkable beauty but also has unspoiled historical aspects that you cannot see anywhere else due to development and these sorts of things.

Schools are now visiting George Town on a regular basis because early Tasmanian colonial history is now part of the curriculum. George Town probably has the best examples of this anywhere in the state. It is easy to access, visible and we can see all the aspects of the river, where ships used to enter the river, the reefs they used to hit, and the development of the different communication aspects from signal flags through to telegraphs. People come down here and go through the three museums. They can see all this early history of Tasmania. This was the third area of Australia to be settled and it is something we have to maintain and keep for the future. It is very much part of our future.

It is interesting that Minister Scott Bacon keeps talking about the value of heritage tourism to Tasmania. The government keeps talking about getting away from the traditional industries and getting into alternative things such as heritage tourism, so why does the government counteract that by partly destroying one of the key aspects of our heritage in George Town? It is incomprehensible to me how they can be talking about one thing on one side and their actions are completely contrary to that.

We have all heard about there being a Macquarie town and there were several early Macquarie towns in New South Wales. Then here is New Norfolk and George Town in Tasmania. What we should be doing is forming a coalition of early Macquarie towns so we have conferences between New South Wales and Tasmania and develop this whole tourism potential that is available to us. Macquarie was the first person in George Town to do town planning. Anyone studying town planning at university anywhere in Australia should be coming to George Town to see what a Macquarie town looked like because it is still more intact than any other Macquarie town in Australia.

From the pilot station, I looked at the first three weeks in November and did a breakdown of where the visitors to the museum came from. There were 624 visitors in that three-week period: 160 of those were school groups who came down to learn the history of George Town. The rest were from various Australian states and overseas. The

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second greatest group was New South Wales followed by Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia, overseas tourists and South Australia. I can leave that with you; it is a breakdown of those.

If you take out these school visitors, something like half or more of our tourists are coming from Queensland and New South Wales. As I said before, they love the place; they love the beauty; they love our history; they love our heritage. So that is extremely important to us.

The next thing I went through in the original submission was the fact that it does not have a social licence. I think this has probably been done to death and there is probably not much point with me continuing with that unless anyone has any questions later from what I have said in the submission.

I guess what we are finding is that this is a government project. Everyone whom we have come across right through this whole process over three or four years have been government people or those who are paid by the government. Trying to win a case in a government project when you are dealing with basically government agencies - I think we are finding it rather difficult. Some of the ones have said before that there has been a fair bit of bullying in this case. There have been threats that they are going to take the whole project away and give it to Sorell, that if it does not go on Regent Square it is not going to go anywhere, and other things like that.

I have only visited a couple of the other CFCs in the state and they are two of the ones that we keep hearing quite a bit of information about and being cited by the proponents as being successful. I have been to the one in Queenstown. The person who was running the Queenstown one has told people from here who have visited that they only wish the CFC was placed near the school and not where it is at that location. I went there on a weekday. There were two children there at it and most of the other people who were on the site were in the online centre watching videos and things like that. So that is basically what I saw on that day.

The only other one I have been to which is often quoted is the Huonville hub. It is in your area, Mr Harriss, but the CFC is not located with the rest of the things at that hub. I cannot talk about Bridgewater, East Devonport or any other those. They are the only two I have been to.

The other thing that has been covered a little bit this morning is the fact the general manager of the George Town has been stood down. I guess what I would ask you is, 'Has due process been followed right through this?' and, 'Is there a danger in you approving the finance to build this?' Well, there is some doubt about whether it has all been properly managed in the past.

You have heard a lot about parking and you are probably sick of it but there are a couple of little aspects that I would like to bring up, if that is okay. My tertiary qualification is in metallurgy. I spent all my working life with Rio Tinto mainly at Bell Bay and at Bluff in New Zealand. I have had a lot of experience with statistics and those sorts of things. I was the one who established all the processes and procedures to qualify the aluminium smelter out here to meet the Australian Quality Standards. A lot of the work involved with that is statistical process control. I have also spent some time in the 1990s as the

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heavy industry representative on an advisory committee to government on the implementation of that sort of supplier certification with regard to the supply of services and goods to the government.

With regard to the parking survey conducted by Mr Eaton, which was done, as you are aware, for six hours on a Thursday in the September school holidays. He then used an unnamed New South Wales survey to extrapolate this so he could then say this was going to be the parking requirements over the full year.

From my point of view, taking a sample like that is a bit like trying to draw a straight-line graph through one data point. You can go up; you can go down; you can make it a curve; you can make it whatever you like, but there is not enough data there to give anything meaningful at all. It is completely a waste of time.

The day that he did that survey there was very little in the way of traffic in that area. I took some photos last week of that area and I will submit these to you. What it shows in the photo taken from near the pharmacy looking at the east car park is that the street is full, the car park is full and everything is full. There is not a car park available. Looking from the other end, the western car park is completely full of cars, as are all the car parks in the street. In this one here there are cars parked behind the Memorial Hall and also on the gravel area. The council has spent \$90 000-odd to prepare the car park for the hall extensions and it is now the subject of this particular development application, which is on top of a development application which was never completed.

Basically from a statistical point of view, the parking survey which was presented by the proponents is a complete waste of time. The only person who has presented anything of significance is Graeme Nelson who applied the council's own rules for all the businesses within that central area of George Town.

I cannot see how a survey on one day in September plus extrapolating a report from a town in New South Wales can take into account the variability and the visitor numbers to George Town, because there are probably 50 000, 60 000, 70 000-odd visitors coming to George Town a year and these are not spread evenly throughout the year. Based on the last three years of data at the Pilot Station Museum - this is January to December and I will also table this - you can see that virtually half of the visitors to George Town are in the period January-February-March. At least half our visitors come in that period. How did Mr Eaton's survey account for that?

The other thing about this particular area and something which Mr Eaton did not take into account is the fact that this is a holiday area. During the summer holiday periods in particular, George Town is the place where the people from Weymouth, Tamoshanter, Lulworth, Beechford, Bellboy Beach and Low Head come and do their shopping and their other things whatever they need to buy locally. Those particular small towns, their population is very high during the summer holiday period; for the rest of the year a certain of permanents live there but generally most of the houses are vacant in those areas. How does he take into account the fact that we have this large change in visitors to George Town and people holidaying in the area within that period from December through to March?

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To me that is totally incomprehensible. One of the aspects which has been raised time and time again is the location of the hub in the new proximity to the Woolworths store. Woolworths here is very constrained by the position they are in at the moment. There is no room for expansion; they have not got a car park which meets their requirements and a lot of the existing car parks are used.

What if in three or four years' time Woolworths wasn't there? Look at Longford. Did Longford think that they were going to get a supermarket on the outskirts of town and that was going to draw a lot of business away from the town? You might have a hub based on the dead end of George Town where there is very little business activity, no supermarket nearby, and that takes away one of the main reasons for siting it on that site. Woolworth's could perhaps build on the outskirts of George Town, on the road on the way in; it is quite feasible. It is happening all over Australia where people are being constrained by the city or town centre and having to build out of town and are taking businesses with them.

With regard to the justification of the project and why I raised that a while ago, I have been involved in a lot of capital appropriation requests, which are requests for capital in my roles at Rio Tinto, and I have written many such requests. The larger ones had to go all the way through to the Rio Tinto Board in London.

On this particular project I have seen no full financial analysis of the whole project. What is the breakdown of the overall development and construction cost? I suspect the proponent may have already spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting this case through the various channels to date. Does this come out of the contingencies or where does it come from? The whole project is 6.9 million dollars. How much of that is already spent, or does this come out of another bucket?

If you include all the costs that have been spent to date when we could have had a CFC already established in another site without any hassle - it is beyond my comprehension. Where are the annual estimates of the long-term operational costs such as staffing, maintenance, and cost of utilities? Are these all shown in the forward estimates and things like that? What about depreciation and insurance - is there a payback? Is there a part payback? Is there a full payback on developing the hub?

What are the adverse effects on the people of George Town? We end up with more redundant buildings and no tenants and no income. The council is going to lose income which means the ratepayers are going to lose income. It is not a good look to come into a town and see a lot of redundant buildings. I know in Launceston I walk down George Street and I see a fair proportion of the shops there are closed and vacant. It is not a good look and it does not do anything to attract business to that area. I suspect the other businesses in that area are suffering.

We have so much redundancy in and around George Town that we do not need new buildings to replace current ones. So what is the point of shutting down our current online centre and the library, moving them 50 metres into a new building and creating more redundancies? It is absolutely pointless. We have probably got the best online centre in Tasmania. Maybe the reason for that is because it is commonwealth-funded and it is not operated by LINC.

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For heaven's sake, can you please get rid of that name LINC? I go to libraries all around Australia and all around the world and they are called libraries.

Mr BOOTH - You heard it first in Tasmania.

Mr WATTS - Whoever is in government after next March, please get rid of that term LINC. That is basically it from me.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, John. Greg, please.

Mr HALL - John, just a quick question to you. In building your case to place the CFC elsewhere, like at the Port Dalrymple School, I note out of your submission you reckon that it would cost about 50 per cent less compared to the cost of the hub, and you go on to say with numerous similar outbuildings. Erected elsewhere in Tasmania there must be off-the-shelf plans available. Have you any construction, architectural or engineering advice to support that statement, or is it just a good old gut feel?

Mr WATTS - I guess what I am saying, Greg, is that if you build the complete hub complex, you are building a building which is probably at least twice the size of a CFC. So if you are going to spend \$6.9 million on a complete building, you can probably a separate CFC for roughly half that cost. With so many CFCs around Tasmania at the moment as stand-alone options, because most of them are, there is probably something which could be pretty easily adapted by an architect to meet the requirements.

Mr HALL - I take your point on that, but I suppose you could argue that if it is a part of an integrated project that the unit cost might be a bit less.

Mr WATTS - It may be. I have no idea to tell you the truth, Greg, but I think that when you are looking at \$6.9 million you are going to save at least a third or half - I don't know. It is one of these things where we have very little information.

Mr BOOTH - I am not sure that the committee has the power to rewrite the English language that has been created around 'LINC' instead of 'library', but I agree with you.

CHAIR - That said.

Laughter.

Mr BOOTH - I really want to make sure that I understand what you are saying. Because of the narrow parameters the committee works on, it essentially goes to whether the building is fit-for-purpose and it is an appropriate use of public money. Is it your view that it is an appropriate use of public money to build the building on Regent Square?

Mr WATTS - No, I think it is an appropriate use of public money to build a CFC on a separate site, but not to build a hub on Regent Square. Not only because of the cost of the building, but the other things that I referred to such as our potential for heritage, tourism and things like that which can have a detrimental effect down the track.

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Mr BOOTH - Is it your view then that the building on Regent Square is not fit-for-purpose in that there are other incompatible uses around it, and there are higher and better uses for that site - like heritage, for example?

Mr WATTS - Yes.

Mr BOOTH - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, John. If we can move to Daryl now, please.

Mr CAMINO - I would like to speak on a few of my observations of Regent Square and a few of my observations of the George Town Council. First, I would like to make clear that apart from some time in the Royal Australian Navy, I have lived in George Town since 1942. When we first came down here we lived just 150 yards, or a couple of hundred metres from Regent Square. I have seen over the years most of what went on around the Regent Square area.

Another thing I would like to do is concur with all the previous speakers, not only from David, on the first day of our hearing; I concur with all they have said. We have heard it all many, many times throughout the other eight days of the hearings as well. I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to make a submission to you.

As I said, when I was growing up around Regent Square there was also something going on around there. There was a football ground available for competition throughout the season, and this included a concrete and timber grandstand, which was situated on the Cimitiere Street side of the ground. There was also two concrete cricket pitches, one in the centre of the football ground and the other on the Elizabeth Street side. There was a tennis court alongside the old Memorial Hall and a second one was built later on just outside of where we are today on the Anne Street side. Anzac Day was a big day on Regent Square.

Children from as far as Hillwood, Lefroy, Pipers River, Low Head and George Town would compete in school sports after the service. It was a big event on Anzac Day. On 21 May each year Empire Day sports would take place, with a huge bonfire and fireworks at night. It was always a big event. During World War II slip trenches were dug on Regent Square, just near the corner of Anne and Cimitiere Street. School children - which I was one of - used to practice hiding from the enemy.

Mr BOOTH - Are you flagging that that is what will occur if they try to start construction?

Laughter.

Mr CAMINO - The circus troop used to visit George Town every year and they would set up on Regent Square for a number of days. Harry Poulson's touring boxing stadium, some of you fellows would probably remember. He would set up with the drums banging and the bells ringing. It was always a big attraction on Regent Square. The George Town Gift used to be competed for just off the Anne Street side of Regent Square - a 120-yard George Town Gift.

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In 1972 the George Town Football Club was unceremoniously evicted off Regent Square, where football had been played continuously since 1882. The club was not given any sound reason as to why this decision had been made. Consequently, the football club did not have a ground to play on for its home games over the following two years. Volunteers toiled on an area of bushland on the northern side of the town clearing bush, erecting buildings and setting out the ground and the undertakings that were necessary to present an acceptable playing service. The question is still asked of the council today, 'Why?' and nobody has ever been able to get an answer.

The council, in its wisdom, trucked in thousands and thousands of yards of filling into Regent Square. It was a notoriously wet ground and they decided to build it up. They built it up - I do not know how much they would have spent - and after all that expenditure we find that today after heavy rain the surface floods and water will lie for many days at a time over various times during the year. The ground is not available for public use for approximately three months of the year because of the wet conditions today.

Regent Square witnessed many more events over the years than those I have mentioned. They have had military marches, company drills, brass bands, army parades, fetes, fairs, brass bands, army parades, fetes, fairs, military manoeuvres by over 1 000 men on one occasion. They had chopping events, outdoor plays and pantomimes and folk dancing, to name just a few. In 1851 there was even a polling booth on Regent Square.

Regent Square has had a long and varied history but always of people and events, never ever of erecting a monstrosity on it the likes of which we have today. History will tell us that this precious piece of land has been of benefit not only to the residents of George Town but to the visitors and others, and it is an ornament to our town - a place to be proud of which is now 200 years old. I am afraid that it may be heading in the same direction as the old rectory, demolished to make way for the building in which we sit today. This council has an appalling record in preserving old buildings and parklands.

In 1953 Mr John Winrod was Council Clerk of this municipality, and upon his death part of his estate was advertised in the *Examiner* newspaper under the heading of 'The Old Rectory' and was duly sold. The George Town Council happened to be the buyer and went about demolishing this fine convict building and had this very room built in which this hearing is taking place today, along with the rest of the municipal offices. This was a building which dated back to about 1841. This council was ruthless and in the early 1960s we saw its demise and it came down.

There was another fine old building also convict built as an inn I believe, in which the George Town commissioner lived for many years. This lovely example of early George Town had a history dating back to the 1850s. It was pulled down to make way for a couple of business houses, also in the 1960s. The George Town Council's track record for preserving historical George Town is abysmal.

Regent Square was land given to the people of George Town and its district. It was reported on 30 January 1891 in the Launceston *Examiner* that 'We are glad to hear that the government have reserved Regent Square to the people as a public recreational ground.' It was further reported on 4 March 1891 that a meeting was held for the purpose of electing four trustees of the George Town public recreation ground.

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One of our local residents today, one of the trustees, was an ancestor. It was also reported in the *Examiner* that:

No doubt the expense of fencing and planting of trees will be very heavy in the first instance but the trustees hope that local subscriptions and the assistance of a generous public will enable them to approach the government and obtain a contribution similar to that for road trusts.

On 26 June it said:

I may state that a few of the residents have very liberally subscribed towards this fund and the list shows some 25 pound 10 shillings already promised.

Please allow the following generations of people to use this wonderful parkland to its maximum, for the purpose it was intend: public recreation and amusement. The community's wish is to preserve Regent Square without any other further buildings.

I would wish to conclude my submission by saying to you, should the hub go ahead, and I sincerely hope it does, then may it go to another site other than our beloved Regent Square - a ground for which the council has shown total disregard to the community, in not listening to what it is saying. Our forefathers would be very hostile if they could see what has been done and is still occurring today, to all the ground work they contributed 122 years ago. I thank you for listening and wish you well in your deliberations.

Mr BOOTH - Thank you, Daryl. In your submission you mentioned that there had been a huge array of different events that have occurred, and do occur, on the Regent Square. If the hub were built on Regent Square do you believe that would damage the Square for other uses?

Mr CAMINO -Of course it would. Anything put on Regent Square will interfere with what it is intended for: parklands, amusement and recreation.

Mr BOOTH - So would it be reasonable to conclude that using public money could damage the economy of George Town.

Mr CAMINO - Absolutely. I cannot stress it enough. I have heard it said by one of our previous speakers, Mr Neilson, that he can save the government, I think he said \$3 million, that is the bottom line, \$3 million can be saved.

Mr BOOTH - Do you have a view whether a child and family centre would be compatible? Would it be fit for purpose to build a child and family centre there when you have things like boxing troops occurring next door, for example.

Mr CAMINO - Absolutely not. Anything that is built further on Regent Square will have an impediment on what it is intended for, for the community and others. I do not think anything should be built further on Regent Square. We need a CFC. I believe we need a learning and information centre. I believe that the right place for those is up on the education property at the top end of town where most of the residents live.

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Mr BOOTH - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Daryl. We will now move to John and thank you for your tabled submission today. If you would like to speak to that please, John.

Mr AUSTIN - Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. You have a copy of my submission, I believe. I did indicate to Shane, with an email, that I would speak on the day and this is roughly based around what I wish to speak about and my submission is based on the fact that nothing is as easy to spend as other people's money and \$6.9 million is a lot of money.

I do not believe that this amount of money needs to be spent. The initial planning was passed through council with such haste as to be indecent. I asked the counsellors to let this plan lie on the table for a month before they made a decision because I have a letter here that I received, and replied to a question I asked on 13 March 2013. Why did it take the general manager so long to reforward to Mr Finch a list of possible sites for the hub building? The motion was adopted to explore other sites at the AGM on 12 December 2011 and it was passed at the meeting on 18 January 2012.

The letter was not forwarded until 11 of October 2012. It was received back to the council on the Friday preceding the council meeting on 18 October and it was passed at that meeting. So, within a few days, this alternative site was considered, and a planning application for Regent Square was put forward. To do such an action in so little time was indecent. Even the councillors were not fully informed of the repercussions of what this planning meant. That is one very salient point.

It would also mean the duplication of services. It is a long way from being in the centre of our town. It may be in close proximity to the shops, banks, et cetera, but it would be far removed from the most popular area of our town, which incidentally would have the most people who would avail themselves of this facility. As has been said before, the Anne Street Medical Centre and Community centre was entirely updated in 2007. I attended the opening and it is a great concept. This facility is in very close proximity to a site that is prepared to be donated and for some reason that site has never been really considered.

What seems strange is that the heritage-listed land of Regent Square seems to have become a primary target for whoever wants to be on it. I believe the education first choice was at Port Dalrymple School, which is up the road. That is not too far from the donation site that was offered. We have spoken about walking distances, and how far, and what is a fair walking distance. The Port Dalrymple School would have been in close proximity for the main users of this facility, I believe, and would not be much further to the donation site, which again is very close to the hospital services and the community centre at the hospital.

If the development was to go ahead as planned on the site in Regent Square, it would double up on facilities we already have: the library, the call centre and Service Tasmania, which operates from this building, which is underutilised. If that were to happen, it would mean more empty spaces and these empty spaces at the present are a source of income to our council and the ratepayers of this community.

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I am a firm believer that CFC would be a good asset to this community, but I feel to spend such a huge amount of money and to duplicate services is entirely unwarranted. The footprint of the proposed site has changed that many times since the original that the mind boggles. What has puzzled me all along is how a plan can be okayed on a site that is already not finished. The redevelopment of the memorial hall slipped under the radar and now we have this awful monstrosity that is ugly to look at, is very underutilised, and the design is shocking. I had the unfortunate experience of being there last Saturday morning and you feel like you're falling over. I do not know if you gentlemen have been in there, but you stand on one side of the hall and if you put a ball down it would roll over into the far corner. That is how bad it is.

That centre was supposed to have been designed as a sports centre but there would be no room to play. It is a horrible building, but a suggestion has been mooted that it could be bought at a fraction of the cost of building a new hub building and converted at minimal cost. It has a huge, first-class kitchen - Jamie Oliver would be proud of it. There are toilets and showers and, I dare say, with the right architectural expertise they could have office spaces and even a mezzanine floor. They could probably make some arrangements to straighten up the windows and the doors so it will become a more functional centre.

If the council were to sell it to the government for whatever it costs, that would alleviate the council from debt and there would still be plenty of money left to convert it for that usage. The needs of the whole community could be met without any loss and, importantly, at much less cost. Gentlemen, that is the weight of my submission. Thank you very much for hearing me.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, John. I don't see any questions; we have probably covered the field. Thanks gentlemen, to the three of you - John?

Mr WATTS - Can I just make one comment? The people who are opposed to any building on Regent Square are basically people who are the heart and soul of George Town. They are the people that give to George Town: they are the volunteers, they run the museums and are involved in sporting and service clubs, the Historical Society, the hospital auxiliaries and all these other sorts of things. These are the people who are basically opposed to this hub development on the square. If the government wants to upset all these people who do so much voluntary work, and if the council wants to do the same thing, they couldn't do a better job than what they are doing now.

CHAIR - Thanks very much, John.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Mr ANDREW FINCH, DEPUTY SECRETARY, CORPORATE SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, Ms JENNY RAYNER, DIRECTOR, LINC TASMANIA, Ms CHERYL LARCOMBE, PRINCIPAL PROJECT OFFICER, EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOLS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND Mr HEATH CLAYTON, PRINCIPAL, ARTAS ARCHITECTS, WERE RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR - There were some matters raised at the last hearing which we asked you to do some research on. We will see how we go for 15 minutes but the committee may reconvene in Hobart at a later time after we have covered off on some of the points which we specifically asked last time. Andrew, first of all.

Mr FINCH - What we wanted to do is report back on some of those points of clarification and then make some concluding comments and answer any other questions that may have arisen. The first item was about the hub not being a successful service model. The community hubs bring together under one roof a range of complementary state government services that provide broad access to information, learning, government transactions and services for children and families in a friendly and welcoming setting.

In particular, we have had a comment that the CFC works better as a stand-alone model. There is substantial evidence throughout the state that integrating multiple services under one roof adds to their effectiveness and social utility. For example, the model that has been in place now at Bridgewater for about 12 months and in Queenstown for about two years, in both cases there is evidence of increased community participation in literacy, adult learning programs and library use as clients who visit the building for one existing service are exposed to a range of opportunities.

Briefly, some of those statistics that we have seen since moving to the new shared site at Bridgewater: the LINC has experienced a consistent increase in membership and loans, including 100 new registrations in the first month.

CHAIR - Before you move on, Andrew, Kim has a question; as we move through progressively we will take some questions while it is fresh.

Mr BOOTH - I am interested in the evidence that you have, you said that you have evidence so could you present that evidence to the committee that shows that the increased participation is actually due to the fact that they are a combined centre, with other services as opposed to simply a CFC as a standalone?

Mr FINCH - Yes, we can. Net borrowing from the LINC locations has also significantly increased at the co-located sites. The Bridgewater LINC experienced a 68 per cent increase in the number of items.

Mr BOOTH - Sorry, is that the LINC or the CFC?

Mr FINCH - That's the LINC, I am talking about borrowings of information for the community to use. The west coast LINC experienced a 34 per cent increase in the number of items borrowed between August 2011 and July 2013.

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Mr BOOTH - But is that evidence that because they are co-located the borrowings have increased?

Mr FINCH - Yes, it is because people are coming in and accessing a range of joined-up services.

Mr BOOTH - You have evidence about that?

Mr FINCH - This is the evidence, we have collected the statistics. Service Tasmania staff at Bridgewater, for example, have reported reduced aggressive behaviour from customers at the counter. That's directly from people. Staff at Bridgewater use the building design strategically to capture specific audiences and target community programs for the interests of their clients so they are engaging clients in different ways.

Mr BOOTH - You have documents you can table there?

Mr FINCH - Yes, we'll table them for you. I guess some of the reasons for this are that the hub is more than just the sum of its parts. For example, the key element of a CFC is to educate families. Having a LINC on hand services as an invaluable extension of this, offering a ready access to free reading sources and family sessions.

Likewise the inclusion of the Adult Literacy Service into the hub will make literacy support an easy option for parents who struggle to read with their children. The adult literacy coordinator works alongside the CFC support workers.

Mr BOOTH - Do think you would get a greater participation with the LINC if you placed it at a McDonald's store, for example, where there are more people congregating? Or is it specific and there are just CFC people who suddenly become interested?

Mr FINCH - We have talked about the specific locations that we go through and the criteria that we have for locating these services. We have covered that and we have already talked about that before. We have the adult literacy coordinator working alongside the CFC workers, and that is a familiar and welcoming presence for people. The Service Tasmania counter allows the CFC clients on-the-spot contact with government information services - Centrelink and Medicare - enabling them to take over a range of issues while they are being discussed at the CFC. Again, it is a collaborative approach to service delivery and it is about bringing real change to people's lives and improving outcomes for the broader community.

The next item that we wanted to cover off briefly was about the plans, and the plans not being made available. We have seen different statements from people, fairly broad sweeping statements, but the plans have been made available to the public. The drawings have not been continually changing. The drawings were lodged as part of the original DA, as is required, and they were part of the RMPAT appeal. They were also submitted as part of the section 43 application, so they were readily available as part of the Planning Commission hearing.

Mr BOOTH - Andrew, there seem to be some contradictory statements from other people, other witnesses in regard to that, can you provide -

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Mr FINCH - I am stating the facts, Mr Booth.

Mr BOOTH - I am glad that you are stating the facts because you are under oath, so perhaps you could provide to the committee the evidence of that in the form of the actual submissions you made and the dates you made them and copies of the plans in each case.

Mr FINCH - As for access to the drawings, anyone interested in viewing the drawings has been able to visit and view the drawings at the council desk.

Mr BOOTH - You will be able to provide those drawings?

Mr FINCH - I think they would probably still be here.

Mr BOOTH - I am asking if you would table them for the committee.

Mr FINCH - Yes, we can. The point I would make is that there have been various statutory processes that have been fully complied with. That includes the council process, the original RMPAT process, the section 43 application and then the Tasmanian Planning Commission process.

Mr BOOTH - The plans were identical each time that occurred?

Mr FINCH - The Tasmanian Planning Commission process has really reviewed other processes in place, including the council process.

Mr BOOTH - And the plans were identical in each case - that you submitted? The plans didn't change, you say?

Mr FINCH - I would have to seek Heath's advice. He will be able to answer that.

Mr CLAYTON - The plans that were submitted to the original DA were the same plans that were submitted for the section 43 application. Any amendments that were made to the plans, as to the permit, were at the direction of the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Mr BOOTH - Mr Finch will be able to provide copies of those submissions and where there were alterations.

Mr FINCH - That went to the question about the DoE and other stakeholders not following due process, because we have followed all statutory processes - building and planning regulatory processes have been strictly adhered to at all times.

We also saw another question about the hub project not being viable due to a lack of budget commitment, but the funding is clearly stated in the budget documents. There was a question about why it was separated. That is just really traditional budgeting between the LINC and CFC coming from different funding sources, but you can combine them to make up the total budget for the project. It is clearly stated in government budget documents, and there is sufficient funding to enable the construction and completion of the project.

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There was a question about the hub and its components leading to a duplication of services and resulting in wastage because there were already some services provided at the local hospital. At present the services provided are mostly clinically-based services. The Child Health and Parenting Services - that is the child health nurse, who is employed for four days a week at the hospital, but also outreaches to programs and through home visits across the community. Other services such as social workers, speech therapy, family support workers, occupational therapists and psychology services all work externally to the hospital.

The child health nurse is the only identified service that will relocate to the Child and Family Centre. Delivering services at the CFC is recognised as the best model of care and the preferred way of working by this staff member. I think that accounts for about one room, from the hospital.

There was a question about the use of surplus property, and the hub leaving them inadequate and therefore redundant. The current George Town library and Service Tasmania locations are considered very inadequate for modern service delivery. We all toured those sites last time we were here and I think everyone could see the -

Mr BOOTH - Was there an objective assessment that defines 'very inadequate'? What was the process to determine they were very inadequate?

Mr FINCH - We have approximate floor area requirements to run these services and that is why the new hub, and other hubs we have built in places such as Queenstown and Scottsdale recently, are based on the required floor area.

Mr BOOTH - So you have documentation to support the assessment that the services here are very inadequate?

Mr FINCH - Yes.

Mr BOOTH - Would you be able to provide that to the committee?

Mr FINCH - Yes, we can.

Mr BOOTH - Is it a written report or a formal assessment or did you just wander through there?

Mr FINCH - No, we have information I can provide.

I believe the George Town Council has recently identified Regent Square as a key city project for future public investment. It stated that such investment should aim to redevelop the site as a landscaped city space with a variety of functional areas suitable for different uses. The possibility of freeing up important infrastructure around the square ties in well with the outlook for future redevelopment. Councils are accustomed to transforming and integrating existing structures to suit changing public needs and goals. This happens right across the board in a range of other areas.

Mr BOOTH - We are talking about George Town at the moment, so what is the key infrastructure that will freed up as a result of that?

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Mr FINCH - Within the current memorial hall where we have the current LINC and online access centre operating.

Mr BOOTH - So that will lead to duplication?

Mr FINCH - No, it won't lead to duplication at all, and I didn't say that. I said it will free up some space. This is a once-off opportunity for a long-term strategic investment for the community. It's about spending the money to get the right outcome for the future.

Mr BOOTH - What is it going to free up those spaces for?

Mr FINCH - I am sure the council will look for key opportunities for future use.

Mr BOOTH - So it's duplication then?

Mr FINCH - No, it's not duplication at all.

Mr BOOTH - It just creates an empty room?

Mr FINCH - No, Mr Booth, it's about getting a one-off, long-term strategic investment for the future to provide the services in a joined-up way for this community - much-needed services.

Mr BOOTH - But it will create empty spaces.

Mr FINCH - Of course. There was a question about lack of safety of kids in the car park, but there is no reason to believe that the car parks proposed for Regent Square will compromise the safety of children. Car parking has been approved by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, the appropriate authority, and it was addressed in detail. It has come up here again in detail but it was addressed in detail. In addition, the hub will provide professionals in the relevant areas to help parents in the supervision of their children.

Mr BOOTH - Do you have some documentation that would explain what will happen with parking? I understand there are only 30-odd car parks available and if there is a large event such as a festival what is the capacity of this centre to operate with no car parking spaces?

Mr FINCH - In our information - and I think it was in Mr Eaton's information - it was noted that if there was a major event there were appropriate stand-by car parks available, including the council car park and so on.

Mr BOOTH - So the people attending the CFC, or the hub, that day would have to find car parking somewhere else?

Mr FINCH - That would be the case, yes. Car parking has been considered in detail by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. There was a question that people may lose their jobs but the DOE has stated quite clearly throughout the planning process that the project will not lead to the loss of any jobs, or decrease in hours. In fact, there will be an increase in

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jobs and all existing permanent employees will be retained and additional opportunities created from entry level employment to experienced practitioners.

There was a question that those enjoying the library for leisure activities such as silent reading will be deprived of this service due to an increase in numbers and subsequent noise at the new LINC.

Mr BOOTH - Do you redefine a LINC as a library now?

Mr FINCH - At the new facility?

Mr BOOTH - Is that the new way you describe -

Mr FINCH - If it contains a library, that is part of, it but there are other components.

Mr BOOTH - We can call them libraries now?

Mr FINCH - No, no we call them LINC's.

Ms RAYNER - Could I clarify that? A LINC includes a library service. We have not abandoned the use of the word library but LINC indicates that there is a broader range of services available.

Mr BOOTH - There seems to be some confusion that is all. People are concerned that the word library has been expunged from every public building.

Ms RAYNER - It has not.

Mr BOOTH - The signs are still up are they?

Ms RAYNER - The organisation has changed its name but we still refer to library services.

Mr BOOTH - Okay.

Mr FINCH - Children and families have always been an important target group for library services. Some people have voiced concerns about an increase in children to the library as a result of the hub project. Essential focus of the LINC service, and the hub project more generally, is to assist in child and adult education as well as to integrate people and build a stronger sense of community. Importantly, the building design will allow for quieter study areas, as well as more interactive ones such as the modern approach to the library as a public service within the LINC.

The further question on the parking. There was an independent traffic and parking study and it was later reviewed by the Planning Commission. The other key point that has not come out, and there were some inferences about the impact on business, but it is noted that the George Town Chamber of Commerce put out a statement in August 2012 that it supported the hub being built in an area that is beneficial to the businesses that operate in the main business area of town.

Mr BOOTH - That was not necessarily in Regent Square?

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Mr FINCH - No, if I can go on. This is from Maureen Lacey, the President of the George Town Chamber of Commerce, who said:

It was a great initiative of the state government and one that George Town needs in terms of financial injection both during the construction stage and also benefits to the community in the future from the facilities provided.

But importantly:

However, it needs to be located in the main business area to ensure it is easily accessible and contributes to the vibrancy of the main business area.

I think that is an important statement from the George Town Chamber of Commerce.

Mr BOOTH - It is silent on it being on Regent Square. Is that the case?

Mr FINCH - I think it was fairly explicit in that statement, Mr Booth.

Mr BOOTH - No, I asked you whether it is silent on Regent Square?

Mr FINCH - If I could make some concluding comments now.

CHAIR - Before you do Andrew, Kim has asked a legitimate question and you are going on to something else -

Mr FINCH - I have read the statement.

CHAIR - If you would not mind listening to the question please and then address your mind to it.

Mr FINCH - I think it is the nature of the questioning.

CHAIR - I will make some judgments about that. The question is perfectly legitimate as to where Mr Booth was going, with regard it being silent on Regent Square. Please listen to the question and address your mind to it, rather than make judgments about the line of question.

Mr FINCH - Mr Booth.

Mr BOOTH - The question I asked, Andrew, was whether the statement from the George Town Chamber of Commerce was silent on the hub being built on Regent Square?

Mr FINCH - It does not mention Regent Square specifically.

Mr BOOTH - Thank you.

Mr FINCH - Importantly, it mentions the main business area.

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Mr BOOTH - We have had evidence that there are a number of other sites that would be suitable, potentially, to fulfil that criteria but not necessarily Regent Square.

Mr FINCH - To make some concluding comments. There have been many issues raised here over the two days of hearings by opponents to this project, including the car parking, interruption to vistas, the impact on the square itself. We have heard that there have been conspiracy theories. Too many toilets in the building, even the terminology of LINC, which is obviously not specifically related to this project, and this list goes on. Unfortunately, these issues are raised by a relatively small group of people -

Laughter.

Mr FINCH - who appear to be philosophically opposed to this project and have endeavoured to identify any possible avenue and issue to see this important project for the George Town community abandoned.

CHAIR - Order. It is inappropriate to have comments from people in the public gallery. We have provided opportunities for public submissions and comments to be made to the committee and we have been lenient in regard to that. If you would allow Mr Finch to continue, please.

Mr FINCH - Importantly, the fact of the matter would appear to be not so much the specific location of the much-needed facility for the residents of George Town, but rather a view that the library should be kept separate from the CFC, as some people would prefer not to have to interface with children whilst attending the library. In fact, this was clearly stated by one of the witnesses in their evidence and today, again, we heard the words that things would not be 'socially compatible'. Since then we have seen a move to push for the separation of the CFC from the hub, which is obviously an unfortunate consequence. It is an unfortunate view and position to take because libraries of today are important places for both children and families together and there are many children- and family-focussed programs and activities offered within libraries.

Further, the essential focus of the LINC service and the hub project more generally, is to assist in child and adult education as well as to integrate people and build a stronger sense of community. As I said before, the building design allows for quieter study areas as well as more interactive ones. The hub, as I have also said before, is more than the sum of its parts. A key element of the CFC is educating families and having the LINC on hand serves as an invaluable extension, offering access to free reading sources and family sessions. The inclusion of the adult literacy service into the hub team will make literacy support an easy option for parents who struggle to read with their children. The adult literacy coordinator works along side the CFC support workers and will be a familiar and welcoming presence. Importantly, there is no conspiracy theory here whatsoever. We have a government wishing to invest a further \$6.4 million for the people of George Town.

Mr BOOTH - Has anybody suggested that there has been a conspiracy theory, by the way?

Mr FINCH - Yes, the words have come out during this hearing.

Mr BOOTH - I thought that might have self-identified there, with that remark.

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Mr FINCH - No, the words came out quite clearly. I will not name witnesses who have used the words, but if you look back the words have been used.

Research and demographics indicate that there is a desperate need for these services and this is about getting the investment right, as it is a long-term facility for the community and the current facilities are not adequate or appropriate. In conclusion, the selected site meets all of the requirements for a hub and was chosen by key community stakeholders. The Department of Education has followed all due processes over several years throughout the planning, consultation and development stages of the project and also through several regulatory processes, including town planning and heritage issues.

We have always had the best interests of the community in mind. The collaborative approach to service delivery through the hub concept is bringing about real change in people's lives and improving outcomes for the whole community. The Huon, West Coast, Bridgewater and Scottsdale hubs are bringing their communities together, boosting morale and providing education and care services to children to give them the best start in life. The long-term benefits will include increased levels of employment and lowered welfare dependency. Again, the building has been designed to minimise the impact on the square, alongside other civic buildings. It only takes up a very small proportion of the square, so, importantly, the square can still be used for the other activities that we have heard it is used for.

The George Town hub will improve outcomes for the George Town community by bringing together a wide range of services in a modern, purpose-built and accessible facility. We contend that nothing has come out in this hearing that should in any way prevent this very important project from proceeding. We are ready to start this important project for the people of George Town.

Mr BOOTH - Andrew, with regard to your claim there has been widespread community consultation, does it concern you that virtually no witnesses, other than the department, have been in favour of the location, that there has been overwhelming opposition from what appears to be a huge cross-section of the various sectors in the community, including a petition with 1 700 signatures?

Mr FINCH - No. The site was originally chosen by the community. Following that SIPS report that was put forward, which was only about the CFC, when it was decided that we would go for a hub within George Town, it was the community that came forward with the suggestion that it be located there. Obviously that was supported by the local council.

Mr BOOTH - But do you understand what I am getting at? The evidence we have had as a committee has been very clearly that there has been an overwhelming number of people who don't want it located here, that somebody responsible for a department is spending a lot of public money? You talked about all the good things with a hub, connectivity and all those things bring together, but doesn't it concern you that perhaps we should put it in a place where the community might welcome it rather than them saying they don't want it there?

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Mr FINCH - We do consider it the ideal location. It meets all the criteria for a service of this nature and we have worked to -

Mr BOOTH - Does it concern you that the community has a different view in that regard?

Mr FINCH - I think it is a proportion of the community.

Mr BOOTH - Does it concern you that a large proportion of the community obviously does not want it built there?

Mr FINCH - Again, we are looking to get the best outcome for the broader community of George Town. The building has been designed to minimise the impact on the square and be placed alongside other civic buildings that are already in place.

Mr BOOTH - In regard to the process, you said the community chose that site but I understand the Education department went through a process to identify the priority sites. We have had evidence to suggest the Education department's first choice was the Port Dalrymple area.

Mr FINCH - No, that wasn't the Education department's first choice, that was under the SIPS report in 2008-09. The State Infrastructure Planning System comes under the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and that was put together in conjunction with Premier and Cabinet at the time. It was only specifically for the CFC but, importantly, it made other statements about being located within a central business district where people were doing other services.

Mr BOOTH - Nonetheless, the SIPS report listed that as the best location for purposes of a child and family centre?

Mr FINCH - Yes, but it was done for a different purpose, which was the child and family centre, not for a hub which obviously has other requirements and criteria.

Mr BOOTH - So therefore to move it down to Regent Square is a less ideal outcome for a CFC?

Mr FINCH - No, definitely not.

Mr BOOTH - Why not?

Mr FINCH - Because it was the local enabling group that chose that site and has overseen - and still does - the CFC.

Mr BOOTH - The SIPS report identified Port Dalrymple School area as the most appropriate location for a CFC and you are now saying, because you've added the LINC to it, it is no longer the most appropriate place for a CFC, so what is the methodology for it suddenly not to become the most appropriate place for a CFC? Why is it that to move it down here, just because there is a LINC with it, would make it the most appropriate place for a child and family centre, which is supported by everybody, it appears?

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Ms LARCOMBE - The state infrastructure and planning data is a desktop audit of a whole range of demographic information that was provided to all of our child and family centre communities as basic information to be considered by the community with the understanding that the community would always put more local community information around that basic data in making a decision for the community about where the best place would be for a child and family centre. It is like preliminary information for consideration, if you like, around transport routes and where people live and other demographic information.

In several of our communities where we have had child and family centres, while that has been one element that the local enabling groups have considered, it hasn't been the definitive information. In Queenstown, for example, the local enabling group made a decision not to take the state infrastructure and planning information recommendation, which was at Mountain Heights School. They thought the central location in the middle of Queenstown was a much better location for the child and family centre. The state infrastructure and planning information is just one element of the information that is provided to a community about location.

Mr BOOTH - Has there been an analysis done with regard to Queenstown, for example? I think we have had evidence that some people suggested they wished it had been built close to the school?

Ms LARCOMBE - I haven't had that information myself. In fact, the child and family centre and the hub is central, as you know, in Queenstown. It is in the centre of the community. That enables much greater and easier access for the whole community. Probably, if we had an ideal world, we would locate the school in the centre of the town rather than where it is.

Mr BOOTH - With regard to the location, you mentioned access to transport, for example, and Mr Finch in the last hearing suggested that people who wanted to access the CFC who had gone to the school and then wanted drop their kids off or whatever who didn't have cars would then just catch a bus, but we know that there is no public transport available like that in George Town. Is that a concern then, that we have had evidence that there is no public transport? Mr Finch has based his recommendation on the basis they would catch a bus that doesn't exist. Is that a concern that the location of it is so far away from the school that it is actually not possible to catch public transport to get there? I will ask Mr Finch shortly to provide that detail we asked for, the definition of what pram distance is, but it is clearly outside of most people's understanding of pram distance and beyond the 800-metre maximum distance from the school.

Ms LARCOMBE - I suppose my answer to that is that through the local enabling group the families who were involved in those processes early on considered both schools as possible locations and made a clear recommendation that the centre of town was where their preference would be. They were families with young children maybe attending either of the schools or one of the three schools in the town. It is those families that made the decision way back about where their preferred location would be and considering all the other information that they had available to them.

Mr BOOTH - Given the overwhelming majority of the submissions to this committee have been against that particular location, is there any reason that you can cite here today that

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it would not be appropriate, for example, to use those couple of places down here in the corner that are abandoned commercial properties? There is the Ann Street donation and that one is just as close to the CBD, in fact probably closer to the geographical centre of George Town's commercial district. Is there any reason why it couldn't be in another location and still meet that CBD area parameter that you have?

Ms LARCOMBE - I suppose from the child and family centre project, the philosophy behind it is community engagement and community involvement in the decision making. If I, as a department representative, decided that it should be somewhere else then I am not respecting the philosophy that sits behind the child and family centre project around that community engagement, community decision-making and involving families in particular in those processes.

Mr BOOTH - But the parameters of a CBD location if you accept that they were significant drivers of why make that choice and you use that as a priority reason, then provided it was on a site that met those criteria it would not have to be on Regent Square necessarily?

Ms LARCOMBE - One of the other factors that was involved in our decision was that we did not have any funds to purchase land at the time when we were involved in this project.

Mr BOOTH - So the free land was very important to the project?

Ms LARCOMBE - Or current government-owned land.

Mr BOOTH - So the Anne Street site then?

Ms LARCOMBE - I think that has already been covered off quite considerably through the whole process of the project.

Mr BOOTH - Was that too far away? You don't regard that as being close to the CBD or something?

Ms LARCOMBE - I suppose it is close to the CBD but it does not meet other factors that I have just mentioned about families' involvement and preferences.

Mr BOOTH - Okay, thanks.

Andrew, this is with regard to the assessment of the other sites. From evidence provided, and I am not clear exactly when the dates were, there were only a couple of days, apparently, where you received a copy of different site locations with the same CFC dropped on it with no different plans. In other words, the hub design was put on these other sites and they were ruled that as not being adequate. Am I summing that up correctly, Andrew?

Mr FINCH - No, no there had been a range of work done to consider the sites. What was referred to was some follow-up information that I had asked for from the council. The secretary of the department and I had come to the council earlier in the year - I think that was said to be October 2012 but we had visited and had discussions about those sites in

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particular much earlier in the year. That was really the follow-up of information so that we had it for file purposes.

Mr BOOTH - So there was actually a proper site assessment for each of those sites by your department?

Mr FINCH - Yes, there was.

Mr BOOTH - Is that available in a documented form?

Mr FINCH - We have submitted information on that already.

Mr BOOTH - Thank you. I will look for that.

The other point is that you were going to provide the definition of pram distance and we have not received that yet, I understand, from the committee.

Mr FINCH - Yes, it is in the information that we have provided.

Mr BOOTH - Can you detail that to us because -

Mr FINCH - Someone commented this morning that it was not able to be answered last time about walking distances but again that was an incorrect inference. We were asked about pram walking distances of course and we did not really have any specific knowledge at the table on the day about that. We have asked appropriate people and we have been told that there is no such thing really as pram walking distance. It is not thought that these considerations should differ significantly from those surrounding regular walking distances.

For instance, appropriate walking distances generally depend on many factors such as the individual's willingness, what services they are walking to and how appealing the walk is on a given day. Ultimately whether the addition of a pram would make walking prohibitive largely comes down to the individual. That was the specific advice we were given.

Mr BOOTH - You made the statement before you had that advice to this committee that it had to be within pram distance. So at that point in time what was in your mind with regard to what pram distance meant?

Mr A. FINCH - I don't recall making that statement.

Mr BOOTH - Okay.

Mr FINCH - We talked about walking distances. I don't recall it. You asked me the question specifically and I endeavoured to answer it based on what I knew and, again, we undertook to follow it up which is quite appropriate, I think, in the circumstances. We do not have all the technical information available at our fingertips.

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Mr BOOTH - No, it is just that the statement had been made that that was a criterion so I asked you for a definition of pram distance and now you are saying that there is no definition.

Mr FINCH - No, I think you invented the term pram walking distance.

Mr BOOTH - No.

Mr FINCH - Yes, I think you did and we attempted to answer it.

Mr BOOTH - Read the *Hansard*.

CHAIR - Order, we will not have a barney going on between the two of you as to who said what and when. We will familiarise ourselves with what happened. Anything else Kim?

Mr BOOTH - No, that is all.

CHAIR - Okay, we have finished with questions, thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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MS DEBBIE RAINBOW WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR - There was a request made from one of the people who gave evidence earlier. It is not the process of the committee to come back and forth, back and forth. We have taken evidence but the committee is very cautious about matters which might want to be revisited or reinforced. We have given due consideration, in my judgement.

If you can make a short statement. We had better bring you to the table so that it is on the record. But if it is a matter which has not yet been drawn to the committee's attention with regard for the purposes of the committee - and I keep coming back to that - the matters which we are required at law to take into consideration.

We have heard a vast amount of evidence, quite appropriately given, on both sides from the proponents of the project and from a range of other witnesses as to processes. We will satisfy ourselves as to process. I keep coming back to the requirement of the law placed upon this committee. The stated purpose, the necessity or advisability of carrying it out, the present and prospective public value and the fact that the committee has no option but to use all of its resources to properly inform itself before making a decision.

Is there a matter outside that, which we have already heard? I am cautious because it might be somebody else who says, that triggers something else in my mind.

Ms RAINBOW - No, it was only to summarise what I said the other day. I rushed through it and I left things out taking into consideration that we did not finish on that day. And I have not had an opportunity to write it up and it was only a few lines of statement. It is not attacking any evidence I have heard today.

CHAIR - How long will it take?

Ms RAINBOW - Less than five minutes.

CHAIR - We will extend you that courtesy and I must say reluctantly but please come to the table. We have given a lot of time for people to make statements. We went way outside the times we allocated and so let us move. You had better identify yourself please.

Ms RAINBOW - Debbie Rainbow. I am not a business person. I came to George Town with \$47.00 in my pocket. I own everything that I possess. I own land. I have travelled extensively whilst living here so if I was setting up a business in George Town and I had a bucket load of money it would be in three parts. I would, before I got to legal courts, before I had to go through planning committees, spend part of that budget to speak to the people who would be the intended users of that building or workplace.

When I came up with the three parts there would be a well known user base, I would be speaking to them and looking at their needs and when we have confirmed user base for a library, I would be speaking to them. We have a confirmed user base for an online centre - I would be speaking to them. When it comes to the other, what I did not know about, I would be getting all the parties together, which has not happened here, and that is all I want to say.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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CHAIR - The committee will remain here for a few moments to determine our next processes. Thank you for your interest shown, both people who have provided verbal evidence to the committee and others who have shown an interest. So the people here are aware, can I remind you that the committee only has two options. The committee can either approve the project or reject the project based on our fact finding exercise.