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THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS MET IN THE GROUND FLOOR MEETING ROOM, HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED HOBART STADIUM FEASIBILITY PLANNING PROCESS

CHAIR - We will start. Welcome, former colleagues Ivan and Greg, to the Public Accounts Committee hearing. Because you are no longer sworn members you will need to make the statutory declaration, if you wouldn't mind.

Mr HALL - Yes.

CHAIR - We have your submission; I appreciate that. I don't believe I need to go through all the parliamentary privilege requirements, you are well versed in those. I will invite you to make the statutory declaration and then introduce yourselves for the benefit of *Hansard* and then speak to your submission and members will have questions.

Mr IVAN DEAN, AND Mr GREG HALL, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Over to whoever wants to start.

Mr HALL - Thank you, Madam Chair and the Committee, for letting us come along and give a briefing to you. As you know, we did a pretty comprehensive submission; we put a fair bit of work into that. I want to put a bit of background into why we arrived at putting in a submission in the first place and that was that we had a great interest in having a Tasmanian team. As we said before, we're now feather dusters but after we finished Parliament we had a small working group which was very informal and we talked about having a Tasmanian team. Essentially what happened there was that we agreed on a position that if we got a team it should be based in Hobart and the high-performance centre should be based in Hobart and the games should be equally shared, but there was never any mention of a stadium in any of the discussions we had.

I have a brief opening statement. I want to make four key points. One, if the AFL is to be a national competition, Tasmania deserves and must have a team. Two, we already have two more than adequate venues that have proved their capacity to host AFL matches, including finals, over the years. Three, we do not want, and Tasmanians, in our view, will not accept an unnecessary billion-dollar third stadium vanity project as a condition of a licence, and four, the benefits of an AFL licence need to be distributed fairly across the State.

In view of the media this week predicting a Federal announcement as imminent, we would like to add our fifth point. The Prime Minister is going to make it on Sunday or Saturday. This will not end with any smoke-and-mirrors funding deal. In fact, the announcement will just be the start of what we predict will be a Franklin River-type of opposition campaign with nearly everybody on the opposing side.

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It is well known that not even all members of the Premier's own parliamentary team support the stadium deal. Almost every Federal Liberal holding a Tasmanian seat has come out publicly in opposition. It is clear from discussion with long-time Liberal Party members that the Premier would not win a vote on this issue, even amongst the membership. The State Opposition is opposed and the Greens have walked away.

Whether you agree with what is happening or not, Tasmania has a long history of knocking off big projects that don't have widespread support - the Franklin Dam, the Wesley Vale pulp mill, the Tamar Valley pulp mill and the Mount Wellington cable car just to name a few. I think the stadium issue has galvanised the whole community, not just the usual protest element, might I say. Criticism has come from everyone, from our longest-serving Liberal premier Robin Gray, to Labor, the Greens and progressive leaders like Richard Flanagan. The stadium opposition campaign could dwarf the Franklin and the pulp mill sagas, and it is all so unnecessary.

The history is pretty simple. This should have been one of the great unifying moments of the Tasmanian story. Instead, it would seem the incompetence and a very tin ear from the State Government and the arrogance of the AFL have combined to turn unity into division, supporters into opponents, and unless they can find a hearing aid they will convert what should have been a winning strategy into quite a defeat, and that would be an extraordinary achievement.

It is hard to think of any issue on which many Tasmanians were and still should be more united than having our own AFL team. Probably the last time was the gun reform after Port Arthur. Yet that overwhelming support has been turned on its ear as a direct result of the imposition of a new stadium on what should have been a relatively straightforward licensing agreement. And not just any stadium.

We note that key former Liberal strategist, Brad Stansfield, is now acknowledging the bill for the Macquarie Point project could run to \$2 billion. What a relief that the AFL has offered to cough up \$15 million and the Commonwealth has been asked for \$24 million. On the Stansfield numbers, that leaves about \$1.75 billion to find. The poor Tassie taxpayer will be where the bills land after everybody else has gone home.

That should be a real concern of the Committee, in our view, and every Tasmanian. We know from the Government's own cost-benefit analysis of the stadium, even on the Government's own figures, 50 cents for every dollar invested over a 20-year lifespan, that is a loss of more than \$300 million. I would have gone broke on my farm if I had followed that plan.

We also know that detailed design work has not started - to our knowledge - and the experience elsewhere is that costs blow out when the details start to emerge. Look at the Christchurch stadium or the new Brisbane Gabba deal for example. Throw in the housing plan and a 3,000-seat convention centre and it is the Stansfield numbers, not the Government's, that start to add up. To finish that off, it is no wonder this stadium deal is starting to rival COVID-19 as the biggest stinker to arrive on this island in a very long time.

CHAIR - I know Josh is keen to ask you a question. I will go to Josh first. Sorry, Ivan.

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Mr DEAN - Madam Chair, all I wanted to simply say was that - and none of you would have had the time to have done this - I was watching Footy Classified last night and there was a lot of talk on this stadium. They put up a lot of figures in relation to previous stadiums, renovations and builds and so on. They looked at the blowout in costs of all of those stadiums. I think it was our good friend Eddie who finished up saying that on the prices given at this stage this was going to be a bargain basement build of the stadium. It was just interesting those comments. Those sorts of comments have come out not only from Footy Classified but right across the board if you listen to people.

CHAIR - Eddie was on with Leon Compton this morning as well, saying the same.

Mr DEAN - Was it as well? It was as well.

Mr WILLIE - He said if you put a roof on it, it will be \$1.5 billion.

Mr DEAN - Yes. You look at the figures and you compare them with previous builds, and even renovations of ovals, and you can see where the prices have gone. If you look at current costs - and we referred to that in our submission - of concrete and all these other things, and that is what these stadiums are built off, in the majority, the costs are bound to escalate. I do not think there is any doubt about that but I endorse what Mr Hall has said in relation to -

Mr HALL - I will just add there, and Mr Willie would well know being in his bailiwick that even with the Derwent Entertainment Centre, the Glenorchy City Council was very keen to move that on and the State Government took it on, the former premier Peter Gutwein. That was a 40 per cent blowout, in the cost of that. With a carbon tax coming up, the federal carbon tax, concrete and steel can only go one way.

Mr WILLIE - I have a couple of questions and you have raised it, in terms of the State's liability under existing infrastructure rules. If there is a cost underrun, the State Government gets the benefit of that. If there is a cost overrun, the State Government picks that up. You have both spent many years scrutinising State Government budgets, you do not buy this magic pudding argument that it will not impact health, it will not impact education, it will not impact housing?

Mr DEAN - The fact is, it has to impact other budgeted items and so on. If you look at the paper, in *The Examiner*, recently there was quite a good story about the tennis centre here in Launceston, for instance. Funding was provided by the State Government in relation to that build of the tennis centre. Where has that gone now? It has gone off the radar. It is missing. Greg may want to add to that.

Mr HALL - Yes. I think it is blatantly obvious that it will have an impact on future forward Estimates and budgets.

Mr WILLIE - I guess, even in your time, the State Government budget is in the worst position probably throughout your time in parliament. We have record levels of net debt forecast across the forward Estimates. Is this a responsible decision in that budget context?

Mr DEAN - I do not see it can be a responsible decision, to be quite frank with you. We are recovering from COVID-19 and if we look at the cost burden placed on this State as a result of that, we will be recovering from that for many years. That alone, having to recover from a

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debt that will be incurred as a result of this build of this stadium. To me, it is just an irresponsible position for the State to even consider, right at this very moment. I have never said that they should not have a new, beautiful stadium somewhere. I have never said that. What I have said is that the timing is just not here, at this present time to even consider it, putting this State to that extra expense.

CHAIR - You talked about your group that met informally, but you had discussions with others involved in that process. Do you have any insight as to when the stadium was made a so-called condition of this? No?

Mr HALL - No, to answer your question, Madam Chair, no we did not. It was never mentioned. There may have been a rumbling or two in the background, but we never formally discussed anything about that at all. It was something you might have picked up about with the media, like talk about the Adelaide Oval and a couple of other things later, which were analogies being presented as a best case of why we should have something.

Mr DEAN - If I could just add, Madam Chair, I am not sure where it came from but in our submission, we have said there - it was 10 June in 2022, I think - the AFL announced the Tasmanian bid was now contingent on consideration of a construction of a new stadium. That is about the first time I had ever heard of it. All of a sudden it came out of the blue. It struck a lot of people - and I had a lot of people make contact with me because of the previous committee I was involved in, in relation to this matter - as to where did this come up, who said we need a stadium?

Mr HALL - Particularly when, I think it was Colin Carter said a team should not be contingent on a new stadium.

We worked on that premise for some time.

Mr WILLIE - It came up in the taskforce report as a long-term aspiration. Are you of the belief if a licence was granted now and not contingent on the stadium and there was a Tasmanian team for maybe a decade, there may be a case for it and you may get support from the population over the long term, as per the taskforce report? It is kind of the wrong priority at the moment.

Mr DEAN - Absolutely. I have had a number of people and business people, who have talked about this matter and have simply said as I have just said to you and reiterate, the present time is just not right for this stadium. We need to get the team on the ground and there are also going to be lots of problems there. Footy Classified went through a lot of those issues last night, if anybody was able to watch. They are right, in my view, with a lot of the comments they made. Very clearly, if Tasmania becomes established and we get our team then, you are right, in the future, yes, let them look at a stadium. Let them look at a new, beautiful stadium, but what they have said here, Madam Chair, right from the word go, if we get a team here that the games will be evenly split, north and south. You even had Government members making a statement that one year there would be six games in Hobart, five in Launceston. Next year six in Launceston, five in Hobart, so 11 games. That was made clear and one of the things they tried to sell to us on us supporting a Tasmanian team. That has now gone by the wayside.

Mr WILLIE - You talked about unifying the State and the division. What concerns do you have if an AFL team is granted in the current environment with the stadium being a

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condition? What concerns do you have for the support for the team, in terms of some Tasmanians not being happy with the way that AFL has treated Tasmania, that they won't sign up for memberships, they will not come to the games?

Mr HALL - Good question. My view is since the stadium announcement, unfortunately, a lot of supporters evaporated. I talk about being across the north, but I know a lot of people from Hobart. I had people from Hobart at home the other day who said, 'no, we don't want this.' I think that will have a detrimental effect, because we had that chance to unify, that seems to have gone. There's a wedge being driven and therefore I think a lot of people will now not become members of a Tasmanian team, even though that's most unfortunate.

CHAIR - You said the stadium was the wedge in that - that's what's caused this shift, or is it something else?

Mr HALL - No, Madam Chair, the stadium is the cause of the wedge, to be quite frank.

Mr WILLIE - Is that because you're closer to the North-West Coast and the Meander Valley and that issue would be particularly problematic in the north and north-west?

Mr HALL - Yes, I think so: and a lot of people I've spoken to in the south are of the same opinion. Unfortunately, you get a situation now - even if you look at the northern part of the state, and I don't want to be parochial here but there are three airports up here and there's the *Spirit*, so people say, 'Well, hang on; let me think about this. If I've got to drive to Hobart, we can actually go to Melbourne'. You can plan ahead with the AFL roster. You can go across, make the old cosmopolitan weekend out of it and everything else, see two matches - all that sort of thing.

I love Hobart, it's a beautiful place, but I'm just saying that there are some realities there and once you get into that situation then it starts to dilute the number of people in the attendances, which would then impact upon the business case. I think there's no doubt that the stadium, if built, will make all those dollars stack up, and the AFL make all the decisions, as we know, on rosters and fixtures and everything else: they have the ultimate power. You only have to read a book called *The Boys' Club* by Michael Warner - they decide.

I have a mate who's a board member of the Greater Western Sydney Giants. He said, 'We're told where to play, when to play. If we want to play at another stadium they say no, sorry, you're playing at Manuka in Canberra. We've got no option.'. You're told where to play and it's all about TV rights and everything else, as we know.

Mr WILLIE - Unification is really important in the establishment of a team and this current division is not a good environment.

Mr HALL - Absolutely.

Mr DEAN - If I could add, Madam Chair, the issue here is that if we look at the North-West Coast and the East Coast of Tasmania, if they're strong supporters of a team they will follow a team just about wherever it goes and wherever it plays, but it is not that person who is going to make the numbers up in this state, it is those other people, the average footy fan, who wants to go to a game of football.

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Who will be able to afford to go to Hobart for a twilight game, for instance? It's the AFL that call the shots - let's make no mistake about that; it's not the Government. The AFL will say, 'You will play these games at a certain time and on a certain day', and so on. Who is going to afford to go, from the average family, to Hobart to watch a twilight game? Stay the night or travel back, say, to Burnie, a four-hour drive which, Madam Chair, you know very well what the time limit is for driving. It is just preposterous, in my view, for them to even consider and think that that is going to happen. To get the support they need, they have to have those people. They are saying that they expect an average of 18,000 people at every game in the initial stages. I would question that, but if you look at the game here on the weekend, it wasn't a big crowd at all.

CHAIR - How many went? Do you know how many went to the game this weekend?

Mr HALL - It came up as 'TBC' - to be confirmed.

Mr DEAN - I was told by a member who attended that if there were 10,000, that would have been stretching it. That was what I was told by a spectator who went to the game. The crowd looked sparse on TV; there were a lot of spare seats. You have to be able to provide opportunities for the average person to be able to go to a game; and that, to me, is not in Hobart, unfortunately, for the North-Westerns, the East Coasterns, and so on.

CHAIR - We're talking just about footy. The Government has suggested this is going to be like an arts and events facility. They're trying to get rid of the 's' word, but we heard in evidence recently that they have said it will be a roofed stadium which you can't play international cricket under, so in terms of other large events, do you have any thoughts about the attraction of large events that will actually underpin the financial performance of such a venue?

Mr HALL - I have a view on that and it I think it would be lovely if that occurred: however, if we are talking about international acts or anything else like that coming I think they are stuck in Melbourne and Sydney because of the sheer cost of the logistics and getting all that stuff to Australia. Crossing Bass Strait is another logistical hurdle. They can go to Melbourne or Sydney or even Brisbane and do a couple of weeks there. I know people travel across to see them. Since they revamped the Adelaide Oval, which is a fantastic spot, there has only been one big event there, that's all. We are but one-sixth of the population of Adelaide, to be quite frank.

Mr DEAN - To add to that, if you look at the event - I cannot think of the name of the event that was held in Geelong, a major concert there fairly recently.

Mr HALL - The Foo Fighters.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for that. Geelong has a population of 300,000 or thereabouts, close to that. That event had to be underwritten by the [Victorian] Government for them to be able to provide that concert in Geelong, which is really a suburb of Melbourne now. It's only an hour or so's drive and all the public transport available, so to suggest that we're going to have all these you-beaut concerts coming to Tasmania and that's going to be an add-on, to me is being quite naive.

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Ms WEBB - Just on that and to be devil's advocate and present the case, I think the idea would be that investing in underwriting those sorts of events from the Government would then be providing economic stimulus through the visitation we'd get from people coming down for those concerts either from other parts of the State or even from the mainland. Therefore there is economic stimulus through that event being held, even if it does have to be, in the first instance, 'invested in' by the Government. What is your response to that?

Mr DEAN - There would certainly be a return. I don't think we could say that there wouldn't be any likely return at all to the State as a result of that, there would, but to what extent? If you look at the winter period in Tasmania where we struggle to get the activities we need to bring people into the State, who really is going to come to Tasmania during the cold heart of winter and spend time here travelling around the state and providing support and income to all the businesses around the state? That's what we're looking at. Yes, there would be a return, there's no doubt about that in my view, but as to what extent that return would be I'm not too sure.

I spoke to my colleague this morning about it and he said, 'I don't think you should mention that', but I'm going to mention it. I spoke to a gentleman here the other day, a business person in Launceston, who said, 'I support the stadium'. I asked, 'Why do you support the stadium?', and he said, 'Because I'm very selfish'. I asked, 'What do you mean by being very selfish?', and he said, 'Because I'm a concert goer and if we can get one concert in Tasmania that we haven't had before, I'll go to it. I have money, I'm fairly well off, as you know'.

CHAIR - But Elton John went to the DEC. We've had those. Riverdance went to the DEC. Lord of the Dance performed here at UTAS Stadium, I believe it was.

Mr WILLIE - Elton John performed up here too.

Mr DEAN - Yes, Elton John performed at the stadium here when I was mayor at the time. It was a great event.

CHAIR - The other comment that has been made - and I think Eddie McGuire was also talking about this this morning and possibly on whatever show you listen to - is that the high performance centre that would be needed to support an AFL team would be a priority for a team because you can't have an AFL team without that support. There seems to be no discussion about a facility. He was also mentioning access to MRIs and things like that. I'm not sure whether the other clubs have their own MRI machines, because then you think about the impact on the Royal with a footballer with all the money behind them going to the Royal - we know how things are down there - and being fast-tracked to the MRI scanner.

Are you aware of any discussions of how that would proceed? Surely that is a part of a team: you can't have that sort of team without that support around it.

Mr HALL - No, we didn't ever get into any detail with that, Madam Chair to be quite frank. The assumption was made that if it's an AFL team, or it's an NRL team or whatever, then to support the players to make them even slightly even competitive on the field then they have to have some sort of form of high performance training centre. We didn't go any further.

CHAIR - The investment in that then would be in addition to the proposed stadium?

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Mr Hall - Yes.

Mr DEAN - It's an extra.

Mr HALL - Yes, it's an extra.

Dr BROAD - That's factored in, isn't it, with the \$60 million specifically set aside for the high-performance centre?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr HALL - Yes, I think -

CHAIR - We're just looking at the whole cost of this to the State though.

Mr HALL - To be fair, when we had these informal discussions, we said, yes, Hobart, the team would be based there; yes, the high-performance centre and so on would be equally shared, but there was no mention of that stadium.

CHAIR - How do you see that 'equal share'? How do you see an AFL team benefiting Smithton, and King Island, and Flinders Island? Let's forget the stadium, we are talking about an AFL team because that is part of it.

Mr HALL - To get that statewide support was what we were after. Yes, Smithton and King Island are a long way away and they're a long way even from Launceston. You're correct, but I think given that that sort of certainty that there is a fifty-fifty mix then that would certainly help the unity for a State team, rather than the division, the big wedge, which has been driven in there at the moment. As I said before, I suspect the AFL will do as they want. They will say, 'That's it, if we've got a roofed stadium'. I'd like to touch on that in a second, if I could please, Madam Chair. I've lost my train of thought. That would be helpful.

It reminds me - and this is a bit hypothetical - just yesterday it was on SEN radio with Brett Costelloe who said that he expected an imminent announcement from the Prime Minister, we know that. We are going to have a 23,000-seat stadium, while I'm not sure it's going to have a roof. That's the other nail that could be interesting. So anyway, they were talking about a perspex permanent roof at one stage and a retractable roof is going to cost \$300 million more. Again, why do we need a roof? I think part of the beauty of the footy in the middle of winter is getting rugged up and keeping warm. It goes on about that. However, it'll be interesting if that turns out to be part of the announcement - that the stadium might go ahead, but it might not have a roof.

CHAIR - So if it went ahead without a roof, then the argument that we need a roofed stadium to have a multi-purpose use facility, when we have Blundstone and we have UTAS stadium here, what do you think about that?

Mr HALL - It's crazy.

Mr DEAN - It's quite ridiculous in my view, and that's what they've said. That was one of the selling points, wasn't it? That it was going to have a roof. It was either going to have a

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permanent or a retractable perspex roof. I don't know as that wasn't spoken about. I think to put on a retractable roof, as I said last night, would cost you an absolute fortune, \$300 million.

CHAIR - You can't play international cricket under a fixed roof, and that was factored into their business case.

Mr DEAN - So that's all come up since that evidence was given and that information was discussed with the pack. Things are changing all the time. I just wonder what the heck is going on. You read something today, then someone says something and then it changes. It's been changing the whole time. There is nothing clear on this at all. It is all up in the air. It's just crazy. To have a concert in mid-winter, you would need a covered area I would have thought.

CHAIR - Dark Mofo has massive events and they have them in the open air.

Mr DEAN - They do. That's down on the wharf area, isn't it? In Hobart, in the main. There are opportunities there, I guess, for cover and so on. I have not been to one, unfortunately but I've certainly walked around the area a lot. I think their selling point has been a roof for the stadium for all these things that they are saying will occur, the concerts et cetera. That now seems to be going out the window. What does it do for that?

Mr HALL - What has been said is a bit anecdotal. We have to make that clear.

Mr WILLIE - It is all speculation at the moment.

Ms WEBB - A moving feast.

Mr DEAN - Assumptions and presumptions.

Mr HALL - Madam Chair, there is one roofed football stadium in the nation, at Docklands. Even the new Perth stadium, the one the Adelaide Oval, the new Sydney football stadium which have just been built, none of them has a roof. None of them. Not even Wembley in the UK has a roof on it. Cardiff has, because it was done for the Commonwealth Games or something like that. It is the home of Rugby League. In the English football association, which is the biggest football league in the world, not one stadium is covered. Not one. They have made a conscious decision that they will protect the spectators from the elements by having a roof around them. However, they want the game played under the nuances of the prevailing weather conditions. That is where they are at.

CHAIR - Makes a lot of difference to a footy match down at Blundstone. If you are kicking with the breeze, you are in luck.

Mr HALL - By the same token, UTAS keeps having commentators saying it has probably the best surface in the country. Blundstone was a lovely boutique stadium. Many people have said why not spend x amount of dollars on UTAS, x amount on Blundstone and then we can look at what happens in the future. If we get our team it is going to be some years before we become competitive. It might be that a lot of other priorities have to come up before that.

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Mr DEAN - It was interesting what Andrew Demetriou said to us during our Select Committee inquiry¹. He made a comment about stadiums and sizes of stadiums and so on. He was saying that you are much better off having a stadium filled to capacity than having a bigger stadium half full. A much better look. It was just an interesting comment he made.

Dr BROAD - We are talking a lot about anecdotes and fudged figures. In your submission, you mention how the task force report put it quite bluntly with regard to a new stadium. It stated:

Within Australia, it is not commercially feasible to operate major sports facilities to recover the cost of capital and to generate a return on investment. Public funding would therefore be necessary.

With that in mind and having a view to the economic arguments that the Government is putting up, for example, that it will fund health and it will fund education, can you reflect on that? Also, the economic justification in the two reports, one by Deloitte and one by MI Global Partners.

Mr HALL - Was Deloitte or PWC the first one there?

Dr BROAD - Yes, sorry.

Mr HALL - MI did one as well, did they not? I suppose, whenever a Government gets somebody to do a report for them, whether it's PWC or whoever it might be, they usually - I am bit cynical here - get the answer they want. That is fine but I -

Dr BROAD - What do you think about some of the assumptions? You have talked a lot about cost blowouts. I think we can all talk about cost blowouts, which would then blow out the feasibility. In the economic argument about jobs created, economic development, do you think that those arguments hold water, including 44 events and including things that cannot happen there, like international cricket.

Mr DEAN - I would question one of those figures. I am not quite sure of the number of employees that they said would become permanent employees if the stadium were built. I think one thousand was mentioned, it could have been even more. I would question that and ask where would you employ that number of people on a permanent basis in a stadium. I am not quite sure. I'd be interested to know how many the MCG, for instance, employs on a permanent basis, in that facility, or some of the other similar stadiums around the country. I haven't looked at that. The question has been asked of me a number of times, because of the position I've taken on this, that we've taken, about the employment numbers. I haven't been able to answer them, to be quite frank, other than to simply query it, but they could all be right. I'm not saying it's not right at all, but I would question it.

Mrs ALEXANDER - My question is, you're both very skilled and you've got so much experience. You jumped on board with a team, supported a team, the whole team idea, which everybody did. Then at one point this new element of stadium came into the conversation. When you heard that, did you have a moment where you asked what is going on here, of bewilderment about where did this come from, the stadium?

¹ See Legislative Council Select Committee AFL in Tasmania
(<https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Council/LC%20Select%20AFL%20Tasmania.html>)

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Secondly, did you actually have the opportunity to reach out to the Premier or other people in Government to ask, 'hold on a second, we've been involved in this preliminary discussion, we've jumped on board, supported, everyone is enthusiastic about the team, but now this thing has come out, what is going on?'

Mr HALL - You encapsulated the first part beautifully. We had bewilderment. I did. I actually arranged a meeting with the Premier, with Jeremy, in his office in Devonport, and I went down to see him. I spoke with him. He essentially didn't want to know. He didn't want to hear anything. I want to say, Ivan, I think you were on the mainland, weren't you?

Mr DEAN - I was -

Mr HALL - On a hook-up, he just seemed welded to his position and didn't want to hear anything. I gave him some information on what the AFL had given to other teams and all sorts of other things, clubs and everything else.

Mr DEAN - Albeit I was on the mainland, I was on a phone connection and so on. Albeit he was welded on to a position, the stadium was raised, the building was raised. I raised the issue of Andrew Demetriou about the full-to-capacities thing with him, and he didn't disagree with that during that interview we had with him. In actual fact, and I am not sure it was in the press or on radio, where the Premier later on came out and he took up those words: a full stadium is probably a better look than a half-empty one. He made that statement. It was either in the written media or it was on the radio. I'm not quite sure now. However, he made that statement. He'd taken that point up. Yes, he was welded on to a stadium at that time, but at least we had an opportunity to talk to him.

Mr HALL - I have always had an open dialogue with the Premier on many things, and on this occasion, I was pretty disappointed, to be quite frank. Anyway, that's as it is.

Mrs ALEXANDER - This would have been in the second part of last year, isn't it, since Jeremy was the Premier, and not Peter Gutwein?

Mr HALL - Yes, it was.

Mrs ALEXANDER - Did you have any other discussions with the previous Premier, with Peter Gutwein, around the preliminary stages of the team?

Mr HALL - We've exchanged a couple of texts. We disagree. Let's put it that way.

CHAIR - I know that it can be difficult to get Government, particularly the Premier, to commit to anything. However, he didn't provide any explanation to you about the process that had unfolded here, and why he was so wedded to it?

Mr HALL - No. He talked the language of what's been put out. You know, 'this will be a great economic stimulus', and he was reading from a sheet of notes. 'It will be good for the whole State' and a few other things. To me, they were sort of throwaway lines. They were the mantra which we've seen.

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CHAIR - So, we'll talk about the jobs. Any major construction, whether it be 10,000 houses, or whether it be a stadium or, you know, a cable car, whatever, there are jobs associated with the building and construction, the design, all of that, there are jobs. However, we know how tight the labour market is at the moment. In Tasmania it appears that we're struggling to build the necessary homes for people to live in. That's what I hear. I'm sure most people hear that when they are out in their communities. If we were to proceed with this and engage the same sort of people with the same sort of building skills, like pouring concrete, construction, whether it is timber, steel, whatever, the same things that are used in homes. You talk about the jobs and the economic growth of that, but what does it mean for the rest of the economy and the other sectors that require these same skills? We talk about walking and chewing gum at the same time.

Mr HALL - I appreciate exactly what you say, Madam Chair, and I think that having recently completely a house I know what a nightmare it is. Builders, just to get their subbies on site and then to get the people to work for them, even that is a very difficult proposition. When you magnify that out into a stadium-sized thing, as I said before, or as Ivan might have mentioned, with probably a new Federal carbon tax, the cost escalation is going to be enormous in terms of concrete and availability of supplies. Concrete and steel are the main components unless you build a timber stadium. It will be very tricky and for somebody to give a fixed price contract on something like this is going to be -

CHAIR - They would have to put a fairly large contingency on it you would think.

Mr HALL - They would have to have a large contingency and they will put contingency clauses right through that contract. They will have to otherwise you are in bother.

Mr WILLIE - I want to go back to the Premier. We know the Premier is a people pleaser. That's one of his personality traits. Do you have concerns about those personality traits in a negotiation with a ruthless AFL? We have seen in emails that have been made public that he completely capitulated in terms of the operational funding. He added an extra \$54 million because of the demands of Gil McLachlan. Do you think that's been problematic in this negotiation, the fact that he is a people pleaser?

Mr DEAN - I don't think it has helped to come to the right decisions, the fact that he is trying to make it look good for all people out there. I don't think it has helped and, in my personal opinion, it has skewed his position, skewed the position that is best for Tasmania, for the state moving forward. It has had some impact on him. Yes, you are right. He certainly wants to please everybody. There is no doubt about that and I guess it is not a bad trait to have.

CHAIR - He's upsetting a whole heap of his own voters on the North-West Coast.

Mr DEAN - Oh right. To answer your question, in my opinion it has impacted and you hear people say out there now as you walk on the street, he is trying to please everybody. He is trying to keep everybody happy but that is not what is happening. The stadium is bringing it all undone and it is not in the best interests of Tasmania moving forwards.

Mr HALL - In fairness, it is a difficult job being the leader. You are always subject to some sort of criticism. It doesn't matter what side you are on and the day when Gil McLachlan came down and they obviously had their discussion and walked straight out to the media -

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Mr WILLIE - In June, yes.

Mr HALL - that was a fundamental error of judgment. Probably another chief-of-staff or whatever it was, would have said 'hang on Mr Premier, let's think about this for a couple of weeks before we do this'. This is a massive decision and that's what rocked everybody.

Mr WILLIE - It was pivotal moment, you are saying, where he had just taken over the premiership. He could have said, well, this has been discussed but it is not going to be a condition of the licence and that is our position as a State.

Mr HALL - That was what, originally, the former Premier had said at the time. Didn't he say that about -

Dr BROAD - The former Premier had said that we need a team. We won't do any deal with Hawthorn or North Melbourne until we know about a team and then they have gone ahead and done a deal with Hawthorn and North Melbourne and still don't have a team.

Mr DEAN - Yes, that's true.

CHAIR - And we are now committed to a stadium as well.

Ms WEBB - I am interested in your reflections around process because from things you have raised in your submission, you have highlighted a timeline with some abrupt changes of decisions about things. You have highlighted some other infrastructure strategies that had been in process that may well be disrupted by this. We know there was a Macquarie Point Master Plan already in place, which has now presumably been overridden. If we were to arrive at this decision to put a stadium and an arts and entertainment precinct at Macquarie Point, what would you have regarded as an appropriate process to arrive at that decision, that perhaps might look different to the processes being undertaken? What could have been done, credibly, to arrive at this decision?

Mr HALL - Macquarie Point has been- well, it has been Mac Point, has it not, it has been like that for a long time, millions of dollars have been spent and nothing has happened.

CHAIR - They would dispute that nothing has happened.

Mr HALL - Yes, I beg your pardon, yes.

CHAIR - There is a lot of remediation that had to happen below the ground.

Mr HALL - A lot of remediation, yes. I would have thought that there would have been much more, in terms of process and in the answer to Meg's question, a lot more consultation with the Hobart City Council and the Lord Mayor, I have read her - she has been pretty clear about some of those things. The veteran community are really upset about it and I went to a meeting - you get sucked back into these things, you end up as a president of the sub branch, and there was not one president who supported the stadium. It is in a very iconic spot, the Cenotaph, even though you would freeze up there at times because the wind comes up the river, but if you have something which has a monolith stuck in front of it, it takes away a lot from that. Also, the Aboriginal community was another one. A range of people and groups which

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they really should have talked with instead of suddenly coming up with that statement, in my view.

Mr DEAN - I would just like to comment, who did the outgoing premier talk to about this before making the statement? That is what we are talking about now. Where did he go to? Was it simply off the cuff like that? I can throw in the decision on Ashley, and I can throw in other things, but what background work was done before this statement was made that we would need to have this new beaut stadium and a covered stadium? It seems to me nobody was consulted, if you talk to people -

CHAIR - The RSL was not.

Mr WILLIE - There were a few emails to an engineer to work out the rough cost on the back of an envelope.

Mr DEAN - Yes, it is just preposterous, in my view, that an outgoing premier would even make that sort of a statement without some proper and reasonable consideration. Now, I am not saying that at that stage they needed to go into it and have business plan at that stage before the announcement was made, but I would have thought that to make it, you would have at least needed to have consulted and taken some views of other people and their positions. It seems like it was made between the ex-premier and probably Gillon McLachlan.

Dr BROAD - Would you agree that the original location floating out there in the Derwent is an indicator that perhaps, and there is no way that you could build a stadium there, in my view, do you think that is part of the evidence that maybe it was made on the run?

Mr DEAN - That is it absolutely. Regatta Point was the first position, wasn't it? Then they moved to Macquarie Point. It is as if things were happening the whole time that they gave no consideration to. Some people would raise an issue and they would say, 'Well, you are right. We can't do that, now we have to do this'. That has gone on and on and on, the roof, the fixed roof with cricket, and just making these statements and these positions on the run, it just defies commonsense, in my view. I honestly cannot understand why it has gone the way it has. I am quite dumbfounded with the way this has come to light and what is happening, even now.

Ms WEBB - Given that, and that reflection on the lack of consultation that appeared to have occurred, do you think that this is the sort of decision or magnitude of project that should have been taken to an election for consideration as a proposal to get a mandate of some kind, given the opportunity to be quite divisive?

Mr DEAN - I am not sure of my personal position. I am not sure that it needed to be taken to an election, I guess, if there was one in time, it would have been. I am not so sure that should have been the case, but certainly it is a project of state significance and the question was asked: Would the state make this a POSS, a project of state significance, for instance? Is it that significant?

Some would say yes, it should have been taken to an election as a campaigning situation or getting their view, but things do happen. I understand that. We've been after this state team for a long time, so I don't think, in my view, that they should have put it off. These decisions need to be made in the meantime. However, what I have said is that you would have some reasonable consultation with the appropriate organisations, people, interested parties, on this

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site, like the RSL and the Aboriginal people. None of it seems to have happened. It's just dumb.

Mr HALL - Just to add to that, Meg, is that a lot of people, there have been a lot of letters to the editor and commentary that there should be a referendum. Maybe that was another way, but I don't think that's going to happen.

Ms WEBB - Drawing on your background, both being parliamentarians, and as Ivan's just raised, it could be identified as a project of state significance under that legislation to be carried forward. It could be identified as a major project under that legislation. One of those would bring it to Parliament, and the other would avoid bringing it to Parliament. Do you have a view on the appropriateness of whether this, for example, is something that should come through Parliament?

Mr HALL - My understanding, and you - or Madam Chair - may correct me, that if it is declared a project of state significance, then it has to have the imprimatur of both Houses before work can commence.

Ms WEBB - However, if they declare it a major project and use that legislation as the basis to bring it forward, it doesn't come through parliament. It will avoid that Parliamentary scrutiny, and has its own process then. Do you have a view on the appropriateness of something of this magnitude coming through parliament to at least have the input then of the elected representatives of the state?

Mr HALL - My view is it should, yes. Just to clarify that, if it is declared a major project, it doesn't come to parliament, full stop.

Ms WEBB - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - It still need to fit with the planning scheme.

Ms WEBB - Yes, but it doesn't come through Parliament. I am just making the distinction between those two options to bring it forward.

CHAIR - You think there should be a Parliamentary approval process for such a major and divisive project?

Mr HALL - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Absolutely. If I was to look at the project, and I can't think of the project name, that when this came up, about projects of state significance in Parliament, and both, Mr Hall was there at the same time, was the one down at -

CHAIR - Ralphs Bay.

Mr DEAN - That's right. I'm trying to look at the value and the cost in that project. It was going to be on the foreshore, wasn't it? It was in that bay.

CHAIR - In the flats, yes.

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Mr DEAN - In the bay area. It was going to be in there. If you look at that and the impact of that project on the State, and if you compare that with the stadium, and the cost of the stadium, and where it is now identified to be constructed, then I say it is similar. It is not dissimilar.

CHAIR - That was also a privately-funded project predominantly, too.

Mr DEAN - It was, it was privately funded.

CHAIR - This is all taxpayer funds.

Ms WEBB - Back at that time there was the project of state significance option, but the major projects option has only been there since 2019. We've had one project go through under major projects, which is the Bridgewater Bridge, which didn't come through Parliament. In this case it would be an interesting decision from a Government and the Minister, whoever the minister responsible will be, as to which option to use if they do bring it forward. One will involve Parliament and one will avoid Parliament.

Mr DEAN - And because of the ongoing impact on the budgets and the cost to the State and the taxpayers, in my view, it very clearly ought to be a project of state significance, where the Parliament gets a say in this right across the board and these people represent the State.

CHAIR - There are always opportunities in the budget.

Mr DEAN - There is an opportunity there, of course.

Ms WEBB - Not to block it, just to scrutinise it.

CHAIR - That's right.

Mr DEAN - Yes, but you look here and ask, why wouldn't the State consider a project of state significance? I can come up with a few reasons as to why they might not. That would be because they may well fear that the whole Parliament is going to have a say on where this is going and what's going to happen, and so on, and that they represent the whole of the State, and not just one area of the State. I can understand why they would probably fear going down that path.

Mr YOUNG - Thank you for your time. Given that, as part of the AFL deal, there's likely to be money spent on juniors and game development in the regions, do you not think that will help to galvanise and unite communities around supporting a team?

Mr HALL - I think particularly, in the country football leagues and I am mixed up in all that, NTFA and think Ivan is too. Over time there has been a lot of dissent with the AFL. There have been a lot of promises made and nothing much has been delivered. I am not sure quite how to answer that question, as it is all a bit hypothetical for me, to be quite frank.

Mr DEAN - We need to be careful here, because it is not just football that we are considering here; it is all the other sports and how that money will filter down to all the other sporting bodies in this state. While we can say there would be more money put into junior football and to club football and so on, we have to look at where all that goes. I raised the issue

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at the beginning in relation to the tennis courts here in Launceston and the new infrastructure designed, or has been planned to be built there, and is now on the backburner, for whatever reasons, we don't know. I think it would obviously help. Any extra monies put into junior football is going to help. I have been involved in junior football for a big part of my life. A football umpire for 20, 30 years, whatever it was. I understand football and where it is coming from and where it has gone, unfortunately. The fact is, it has dropped off in this State, tremendously, right through and that is sad, because we have not put enough into the junior programs and into schools in particular. So, yes, it would help.

Mr YOUNG - Where do you think Tasmanian football will be if we do not get an AFL team? What will happen to Tasmanian football?

Mr HALL - It will probably revert to our regional competitions, which basically is what we have now. There's tremendous competition, as Ivan said, with soccer, the round football game. My grandkids are playing it, even though they are also doing Auskick, but I can see the pathway that is going down. You go on a Saturday morning and see how many kids are playing soccer. They have really moved on and there are different reasons for that. Also of course basketball, with the JackJumpers. We only had two games up here last year, but that is another story. That was a bit of a sore point with some people, but young people have embraced that. Their parents have embraced that.

CHAIR - Parents probably have some concerns about the risk of head injury at the moment with the current action that is happening.

Mr HALL - Yes, indeed. I think the NRL and the AFL, both codes are going to be under a lot of pressure down the track.

CHAIR - A lot of financial pressure. It is about to come down the line.

Mr HALL - Indeed, yes.

Mr DEAN - Just to continue the answer there. If you go around to Heritage Park at the present time here in Launceston you will see how that facility has developed. I think they started with one soccer field there, now they have a number of soccer fields. It has just gone haywire with soccer.

To answer your question, if we do not get a Tasmanian team it will impact AFL, it has to, because of the young people coming through. We probably won't see a pathway in this State and it will be very difficult to get drafted. It was interesting last night, on Footy Classified, they looked at the figures for drafting in this State. Since 2015 to now the last drafting period had been 15 Tasmanian boys drafted into the AFL, whereas in a country place on the mainland - I cannot think of the name of the place and someone else who watched it might tell me - there had been 50-plus drafted into the AFL. They were saying very clearly it leaves Tasmania well behind with where we are going and what we are doing. It will impact, in my opinion, and we will see AFL probably drop off even further, with basketball and soccer coming on that are also seen as less contact sports. Both of them, be it they are contact sports, basketball is a contact sport, as much as they say it is not supposed to be -

CHAIR - Umpires pull you up.

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Mr HALL - I think, Madam Chair, what saved a lot of it is the fact we have embraced AFLW. Deloraine, for example, we have three or four women playing in women's competitions and having that extra weight of numbers across the State has helped to add to that critical mass of keeping some of the clubs going because they are run by volunteers. It is just tough, it is a tough gig.

CHAIR - The umpires -

Mr DEAN - Sorry, it is in our submission and to make it clear: Mr Hall and I strongly support a Tasmanian AFL team. We have fought for this for a long time and the time is here, now, for that. The reason I support that is I can see where AFL is going, where footy in the state is going, which is backwards. I umpired in a number of places where teams now no longer exist. The Leven Football Association is a good example, no longer exists, the whole association, which was providing football opportunities for those people in the main who were getting towards the end of their football careers and and so now, have just dropped out of footy. That all has health implications, it also has a lot of other implications, so we need an AFL team. Thank you.

CHAIR - One quickly with Josh, and then we will have to wrap up to give you a chance to make some closing comments.

Mr WILLIE - I have a couple of questions, one is on the funding from the AFL. They have just signed a record broadcast deal. Do you think there is some smoke and mirrors around the dividend that will come to Tasmania? It is something a new franchise could expect anyway. We know if you look at the annual reports that AFL invest heavily in every franchise team, is there a bit of smoke and mirrors here where they have tallied it up and -

Mr DEAN - I would say yes. If you look at \$15 million from the AFL to be put into this stadium, really is a paltry figure and the AFL can pull that amount of money out of their fob pocket. Why have they done that? If you look at what the AFL have done in relation to GWS and the Suns and so on, then one would have expected the State to come out in at least a similar if not a stronger position because of our location and where we are and the fact we have fought for so long. I think there is a lot of smoke and mirrors, quite frankly.

Mr WILLIE - There are theories out there the AFL never wanted to give Tasmania a team and they have made it as hard as possible. Potentially, the stadium is making it hard. Do you subscribe to that theory? We now have presidents potentially trying to find other reasons, we have had a bit of speculation on the radio.

Mr HALL - The politics of the AFL are complex and diverse and I agree with that statement. I think they have always made it, where a lot of clubs say, oh hang on, we are going to have to provide somewhere along the line in drafts and everywhere else is going to be a pool of players and some of those we may well lose to a Tasmanian team.

CHAIR - Tip of the run contracted players, they are particularly concerned about.

Mr HALL - Yeah, that is what I was trying to say.

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Mr WILLIE - They have set this hurdle of a stadium and that looks like it may be reached, do you have concerns that presidents may be looking for other reasons now not to support a Tasmanian team?

Mr HALL - A bit hard to comment on that one, I really could not say.

Mr DEAN - The decision on the Tasmanian team was supposed to have been taken in August 2022, and for what real reasons was continually put off, and put off and we still haven't arrived at that stage. There was this big talk about it, and now they are saying it is probably contingent on the stadium. If the stadium was approved, it still has not said we will get the team, and maybe we will, but we cannot say it is a foregone conclusion we will get it. You are right, you have put up, why do they do this? As I understand it was Peter Gutwein who first put the idea to Gillon McLachlan, who then seized on that point and suggested getting a team is contingent on you building the stadium. They seem to put up these hurdles all the way through as to whether or not Tasmania should get a team. They know that Tasmania has done it tough for a long time, but quite frankly, I do not think they are wanting to help us too much with getting a team.

CHAIR - Do you think it is possible to separate out the two conversations here: the AFL team, which for years you guys and others have fought for; and a stadium that may or may not be built right now but as an important investment for the State? Is it possible to now separate them, or are we stuck with the set of steak knives as well?

Mr DEAN - They should have been separated. We discussed that as late as this morning in relation to the two projects. They are separate projects, in my opinion. The teams are totally separate from the stadium and that's how they should have been dealt with, but you're right, Madam Chair, they have now brought them together and it's one project.

CHAIR - You don't think they can be separated so we can have a rational conversation about both?

Mr DEAN - They can be separated, in my view, even at this late date, but they're not likely to be, because of the strong stance taken by the AFL and Gillon McLachlan. I don't think he would likely backtrack and there is some suggestion that he may even stay on now in the AFL. I'm not sure if it would be in the same capacity or even in a bigger capacity. There's some suggestion that he will stay there.

CHAIR - What about the Premier's position, though? Do you think the Premier could force the separation of the two areas?

Mr DEAN - Would he force that? There is strong support for a Tasmanian team in the State; I think that is clear. We throw these figures around and I think there was a survey done on this by *The Examiner*, and the ABC might have done one as well, to show that the numbers in this state supporting an AFL is quite high. I think we can accept that as being right. Having said that -

CHAIR - Politically, can the Premier come out and say we're going to do these two things separately?

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Mr HALL - My view, Madam Chair, is that is what the Premier should do. I think he would get many plaudits from the Tasmanian people if he said, 'Okay look, we've jumped the gun here, we shouldn't be going down this track. We still want the team.'. That's what he should do, in my view. It's easy for me to sit here and say that but that is what he should do -

CHAIR - I am asking your opinion.

Mr HALL - and a lot of people have said that. Many people have said there's no harm in saying, 'We made a mistake, we recognise that there's a lot of angst out there and we should move in a different direction'.

CHAIR - You might get the Greens back in the tent.

Mr HALL - Yes.

CHAIR - The stadium is what their argument was about and the tripartisan support that was from the announcement and now the Greens have stepped away because of the stadium, as I understand the media around that. I haven't spoken to them.

Mr HALL - Yes.

CHAIR - We have run out of time, but are there any closing comments you want to make? Anything you haven't said that you wished you had?

Mr HALL - I just think we have to recognise that Tassie is a decentralised state. A lot has been talked about Adelaide, for example. Look what a stadium has done for Adelaide. I have heard that from some people. The Adelaide Oval as a world iconic stadium. It is like Perth. Perth and Adelaide both have 85 per cent of their state's population. Hobart has about 44 per cent. That's not saying anything against Hobart but we are different demographics and that's what they don't realise. If we just look at the Adelaide Oval, for example, and the access in there. I have been there several times. It's flat, it has trams, it has trains, it has everything going for it in terms of access, whereas the proposed Macquarie Point site is fraught with all sorts of difficulties - engineering, financial and social.

CHAIR - And access.

Mr HALL - It goes on and on, doesn't it? You could say perhaps out in Mr Willie's electorate perhaps a greenfield site at Glenorchy might work. I don't know.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. We appreciate your submission and your evidence today and we will end the hearing.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

The Committee suspended from 12:19 pm to 1:47 pm.

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CHAIR - By way of formality, Mr Richardson, we welcome you to the Public Accounts Committee hearing into the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point in its connection with the AFL licence for Tasmania.

This is a public hearing. The transcript will be prepared and published on our website. Everything you say in front of the Committee is covered by parliamentary privilege but that may not extend to anything you say outside the Committee. If there is anything you want to tell the Committee that is of a confidential nature you can make that request, otherwise it is all public. Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Mr RICHARDSON - No.

CHAIR - Thank you for coming in earlier; it helps us to move some of our other things around our schedule but we will give you the same amount of time.

I would appreciate it if you could make the statutory declaration and then you can speak to your submission and make an opening comment if you would like.

Mr ROBERT RICHARDSON, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you. I invite to make any opening comments and speak further to your submission.

Mr RICHARDSON - Thank you for the opportunity to expand upon what I have said. I don't know whether you have acknowledged the traditional owners of the land but I certainly will and where we are meeting.

Could I say at the outset that I have been working on the submission that I have interest in for nearly 12 years. About 12 years ago I had to go to Hobart because that is the only place in the State where bypass cardiac surgery is available. You have to go to Hobart. Following that I had another 13 years as a licensee of the Westbury Post Office. You might ask what has that got to do with this? I had dozens of people come into the post office over a period of several years and they too had to travel to Hobart because the State Governments, both flavours over the years, have chosen to put certain medical and health facilities only in Hobart, so people have to travel to access those services. They were struggling, because when I spoke to the people or their relatives who were going down there, they were often young families. If you're a young family, I can remember that, the mortgages were high and the expenses were high and there was not much free cash. If you had to go to Hobart now for say a fortnight you're not going to have much cash left out of \$3,000 for accommodation, travel, meals - it's going to be that sort of figure - and you tell me how many young families have \$3,000 cash floating? That is a fair old worry for them.

At the other end of the scale there were lots of people on welfare, particularly elderly people, and often they don't have \$3,000 because you've got to spend it to claim it back and nowadays if you do that you're going to fall a long way short because the reimbursements are going nowhere near to covering it. I would deny anybody who had to go to Hobart to get out under about \$300 a day, and the latest I heard it was about \$88 a day reimbursement. That's a big difference and most people in those categories don't have that money.

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So I started working about 10 years ago on finding a way to rectify that. We hear lots of problems with the health system - everything from ramping ambulances and emergency wards and lack of doctors and all sorts of things, but when did we last hear about the problems with people who have to travel? I have never heard it and it's about time it was heard. I started working on a submission way back about doing something about it. Then Mac Point came up about two years ago and I thought, 'Hello, here we have a vacant piece of land about three blocks from the Royal Hobart Hospital - you beauty!', and then suddenly out of the blue we were hit with the proposition of a stadium on that same block of land. That concerned me so I kept looking at the sorts of things that ought to have been investigated and published in our nice, little business cases.

Quite frankly, I don't have an MBA; I have a Graduate Diploma of Business Admin. I didn't complete the MBA because the dean of the business faculty at Swinburne University of Technology didn't accept the subject of my proposed 30,000-word thesis. I didn't complete the MBA because I had a thesis title of *Bypass Surgery - an economic development business plan for a small town being highway bypassed*. You know what the dean said to me? 'That's not important enough.' What a joke. So I didn't complete but I did unofficially and I used it with Westbury. Have a look at Westbury 20 years ago and have a look at it now. The town is thriving because I produced a proper business plan and it's really going well.

I looked at the business plan that was put up for the stadium in Hobart and if a student had passed this in I would have failed them and said go back. There are so many holes in it. Firstly, one would expect a business plan to look at all the factors that are needed in order to come to a decent conclusion. It didn't. Wouldn't you have thought demographics might have been part of it? They didn't do it. There's no demographics there of Tasmania.

Then they looked at the alternatives. They looked at alternatives for a stadium - all within about 200 metres of it. They should have looked maybe 200 kilometres and see where the alternative sites might be. They didn't.

They even went to the point to make their case look good when they selected the figures in terms of previous attendances at matches. They didn't choose Bellerive Oval. Why? Because York Park always had bigger figures so they chose York Park figures. That's distorting the facts. Terrible stuff.

I then kept looking and one thing I did was that I looked at the heritage of the area. They didn't mention heritage in it. That's a map of the area and all the blue areas are already heritage-listed. This bit in here is not heritage-listed and that's where they want to build the stadium.

I then did some more investigations of what the heritage of this whole area was. I will table that, if you would like it?

CHAIR - That's fine.

Mr RICHARDSON - In 1804, on 20 February, the Reverend Robert Knopwood, chaplain of the ship that came into Hobart with the first lot of convicts, reported - 'They came ashore and walked through the fires and camps of the natives'. Now, if that's not heritage then what on earth is?

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Then I started looking at the convicts. How many of you are aware of the Enclosures Act? That's what caused convictism. The rich people in Britain simply denied them access to their old town commons and even their villages. They had no option but to steal. Ninety per cent of the convicts on that first ship into Hobart, on the Ocean, were convicts because they had stolen food or clothing or the means to get food and clothing. They weren't criminals. The criminals were the rich Britons who pinched their land from them. It's as simple as that. I believe that that area is very rich in heritage and we should be recognising the memory of those people.

So, I did that study - all very brief. I've got very limited resources. I'm an aged pensioner so I've got very limited resources but I do have some degree of desire to find the truth. That wasn't mentioned in these things - the heritage - yet, it's pretty important in that area. That's where it all started. The convict movement in Australia was worst in Tasmania - absolutely the worst. There's no Sarah Island or Port Arthur in New South Wales, Queensland or Victoria. Here was the worst. The Aboriginal people were treated the worst of any state, and every state; none of them came near. We even had governors making statements to the free settlers: 'Carry a pistol and a gun with you, even if you're going from the back door to the outside dunny. You can shoot them if they come near'.

You can probably guess I am pretty angry about all of that stuff, and it hasn't been recognised. There is nothing in this, and when I look through the figures - they're just not there. When they said it's going to cost \$715 million - no it won't, it's already had \$250 million spent because there are perfectly good TasWater facilities at Macquarie Point. I was told about five years ago that they had at least the life of 30 years but they've spent \$250 million moving them. Add that to the \$715 million, and Eddie McGuire this morning on the radio said: 'If you're going to put a roof on it, once you've built the stadium, add \$1.5 billion on top of that'. So the cost is never going to be \$715 million - probably, \$2 billion to \$3 billion. That's about, even as they have stated, \$4,000 per household. Every household in Tasmania. That's the cost. That's without the ongoing.

I don't know whether you're aware of what a membership of an AFL football club it is but it basically gets you in the gate to home games. That's what it is. You're looking at an annual membership fee, somewhere between and \$500 and \$600 a year. To get anywhere near break-even ongoing, there's going to have to be between 60,000 to 80,000 members. You reckon you can drum up to 60,000 to 80,000 Tasmanians to stump up \$600 a year for the next 10 years? I very much doubt it.

I could look through the details of those reports but I'd take a week. I really think they are very poor and they haven't come up with the goods. What I've done, going back 12 years ago, is look at what I believe is a fitting proposal. It is consistent with the background and all the other things. I've even included maps from 1811 of what was there. I've included other maps along the way. I haven't got the resources to get a picture, so I used the one from the *Mercury*. I've marked on it where those people landed, right at the southern end of Mac Point.

There are other sites which probably could be included in heritage. For example, the surgeon and the assistant surgeon, Messrs Bowden and Hopley, had pieces of land just to the north-east of where the Hobart hospital is now. They should be listed. There were two plots of land on Macquarie Point allocated to Mr Collins. I wonder who that might be. Wouldn't be David Collins, would it? Not listed. But I believe they should be.

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I think there's a heck of a lot more work to be done. I haven't got the numbers of people visiting Hobart, Hobart hospital, but it would be so easy. All they have to do is look at the records for the last year or two, and look at the post code. If it's seven three or seven two is the north of the State. Pull them out, and there're your numbers and what they were in for. To find the numbers would be a week's work for a clerk. As I said, I don't have the resources to do that, and I doubt I would be given access. I have asked for those figures, but I'm still waiting for them to be supplied.

I guess that's where I come from. The submission I made covers that sort of stuff. What I am proposing is to cater for those patients who have to travel to Hobart. I believe what we ought to have is a memorial park land where the park land recognises convict, Aboriginal, and veterans' history. Wouldn't it be great if they could collaborate in designing it?

Then, in amongst it, have low rise buildings. I brought in a press clipping - What's happening in Melbourne. Along St Kilda Road is going to become park land. It's happening in all the big cities of the world. They are greening cities. I will table that. The cities are being greened. If you go down to where Mac Point is, isn't it a wonderful park land? Thousands of acres of tar and cement. That's what it looks like. If we build these buildings there, it'll be even worse. Wouldn't it be nice to actually have a memorial park to those people, and have low-rise buildings that are modelled on Ronald McDonald House? That's a great institution. I've contacted them to find out how they run. It would seem to me that's the sort of thing that's needed for somebody coming from Smithton or Stanley or Scottsdale or even Southport. If they the only place they can get treatment is the Royal, let them stay there and not worry about the expenses. Mostly they will have a carer with them, too.

So, I guess that is where my proposal is, so I will table that with the other bits and include other things that I have done. I do not know whether you want my CV or not, but I can give you that too.

CHAIR - We are happy to receive your CV.

Mr RICHARDSON - The last thing I would like to say is that I grew up in communities. I now live in economies. Is this the way we want our society to go: that everything is determined by money? Because that is what it is headed for. That worries me. As somebody who had 37 years in Rotary and Apex, including being state president of Apex, president of two Rotary clubs, and all sorts of other things, including life education centres, Red Cross, and you name it, I have volunteered over 60 years, and it worries me that I see money dominating things more and more.

Is it economically feasible? No. Triple bottom-line accounting is what I was brought up with. I see nothing in this report about environment. Financial, environment and social are the three elements of triple bottom-line accounting. There is nothing about environment, nothing about social impact, just money. Do I think they are good reports? That report was nothing more than the coffee table thing. It's terrible, and I am surprised they let it go out like that.

Incidentally, with this one, every time Tasmania is mentioned, it should be Hobart. Because that is what it is all based on. The 'Hobart Cabal', as I call it, is running things. Most people in Hobart are pretty good, I've lived here for 25 years.

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Well, I could go on forever, but I won't. Incidentally, to go on with the topic of Hobart, I got the *Australian Geographic* yesterday in the mail. Inside the front cover is a three-page spread: come south to Tasmania, go to kunanyi, have a nude swim on the beach, in Hobart. All Hobart. I think if I was coming to Tasmania in winter, I might go to Cradle Mountain, Mt Barrow. That is what I am getting at with this Hobart cabal. Whoever is controlling Tourism Tasmania needs to have a closer look. I am not parochial: the parochialism rests with the cabal in Hobart.

There was even a cartoon in 'the Mac Point Thunderer', sorry, the 'Hobart Mockery', sorry, the *Mercury*, that was blatant in its comments to the North and North-West of the State, it was terrible. I have that in my bag somewhere too.

CHAIR - Mr Richardson, there have been a number of other proposals for Macquarie Point. You have put your own ideas there. Being as there has been a not insignificant amount of money spent on the site, quite a lot of it in remediation because of years of pollution on the site, effectively -

Mr RICHARDSON - Metals and asbestos.

CHAIR - Yes. Do you think we should look at one of the previously and most recently approved plan that was to be progressed by Government? There had been approval for that, why do we need to keep looking for something else?

Mr RICHARDSON - We need to look at things, first of all, in health. This block of land is not Hobart, it is Tasmanian. It has been forced into that role by things like the Health Department decrees that certain medical procedures will only be available in Hobart. It has become a State issue and that area does not get mentioned, but it should do.

CHAIR - In terms of the health fund, some of the specialist services like neonatal intensive care, just one of them, you do need a critical mass of patients, a critical mass of specialist nurses and paediatricians and neonatologists, et cetera, to look after those little babies. You are not arguing that we should decentralise those services, are you?

Mr RICHARDSON - I am suggesting what we need is helping those people to access them. If they are going to be concentrated in one place and not duplicated then we need to help the patient.

CHAIR - In other plans that have been mooted there are other forms of accommodation like apartment buildings and things like that. There have been other plans for Macquarie Point and the escarpment including a medi-hotel at one stage that would have provided some of that. Do you think there is room within the current - or the former now - plan for Macquarie Point that you could achieve what you are suggesting without having to rewrite the whole plan?

Mr RICHARDSON - I would be very amazed if you could because it will be privately run. Just last week I spoke to a young mum who is a pharmacy assistant in the Tamar Valley. They were down there for three months with their bub. Where did they get three months' money at that age for accommodation and so on? They couldn't. But there was something that did provide it.

CHAIR - Ronald McDonald.

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Mr RICHARDSON - Yes, Ronald McDonald House but that is only for those up to 18 and there is a limited number. They have 11 units.

CHAIR - Yes, I am aware of that.

Mr RICHARDSON - I think this has to be a Government thing so that when people come down with their children, or whether it is for a heart bypass operation, they do not have to worry about money. They walk in, no mucking about with forms. My concern was that hotels and the rest of it on that site will simply add to the tar and cement. The people who go there for medical help still have to pay out first before they go and the prices have gone through the roof in the last few years.

CHAIR - The proposal the Government has put on the table at the moment claims to still include a form of reconciliation and art park. Do you believe that if a big building, like a stadium, was put on that site, you could then adequately address the heritage and Aboriginal concerns that you have raised?

Mr RICHARDSON - With what I have told you about Aboriginals and convicts, to place a fun park and a football stadium on top of that would be like dancing on the graves of our ancestors. I feel that strong.

CHAIR - You don't think both can coexist?

Mr RICHARDSON - No, it is inappropriate to dance on the graves of our ancestors.

Dr BROAD - In the past it was a rail yard.

Mr RICHARDSON - Things like the Black War were hidden until about 1980. Thankfully we have had people come along like Professor Henry Reynolds and start the work and then Cassandra Pybus and a whole heap of other people. We are starting to get the body of knowledge. In my own private collection, I have 50 books of early Tasmanian history, including Aboriginal history. It is mostly very recent that we found out. There are other things that happened in that area. I know my great uncle was one of the people who used that area for the transport of goods up and down the Derwent on the *Huon Chief*. He had that, Watty Richardson.

At that stage, still, a quote from 1973 of the late Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, who made a damning statement in my opinion. He said of the Australian Aborigine would be the 'lowest form of human life', word for word in his biography written by Master. That is how the thinking was, still then.

Dr BROAD - Along those lines, what do you think then about the MONA vision of a truth and reconciliation park?

Mr RICHARDSON - You are getting there but there is no reason why a combination couldn't be mixed in with it and I would also add in the convict history. I think we need to. If you go to Sarah Island and hear the spiel there, there was one bloke who was being whipped for whatever reason. It would have been a cat o' nine tails and it got to the stage where a few

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of the convicts who were forced to watch on made the comment, 'You can stop whipping, he died five minutes ago'. That is pretty brutal.

Ms WEBB - Very brutal, isn't it?

Mr RICHARDSON - And that is what happened, not to all convicts but to some of them it did and many others. Just separating a nine-year-old William Appleton from his parents for stealing one-and-sixpence worth of bacon, seven years. He was nine. Just separating him from his family and everything. That is cruel enough but then to get here and cop another lot. It wasn't all that good down at Point Puer, not good at all. My great great grandfather was on the first convict ship as a convict, as he was then. I started researching it in about 2000 when I was asked to provide the Knopwood Lecture. William Richardson was Knopwood's convict manservant for many years. I have an interest in it.

Ms WEBB - I think the heritage perspective is an interesting one to hear about. Thank you for tabling your alternative plan. It will be interesting for us to take a look at. Had you seen the recently released alternative vision that was presented by Richard Flanagan and Kate Warner and others just last week?

Mr RICHARDSON - I have seen it only in the papers. That is what I would say in terms of the whole process: I probably read the papers and listen to the news more than anybody else in the North of the State and some of you have had letters from me proving that. I write prodigiously when I get those things. I read at least two papers every day, the Southern press and the Northern press. I also read the Saturday paper on Saturday and sometimes there will be others as well. I can't recall seeing a single advertisement advertising a public meeting or an information session about the stadium in the North of the State. I haven't seen a single one. Maybe I missed the paper that day but I haven't seen it.

Ms WEBB - Do you mean from the Government holding some form of consultation? Is that what you are referring to, an absence of?

Mr RICHARDSON - Presumably that is who is proposing it. I haven't seen anything. There has been no public meeting in Launceston or Burnie or anywhere.

Ms WEBB - Or Hobart, run by the Government.

Mr RICHARDSON - They are the proponents but I haven't seen it. Maybe I am wrong. I even missed the advertisement for this but then again, 17 December is not a good time to put ads in the paper unless you have a development application in that you hope nobody will see. I saw a few of those in 18 years as a councillor.

CHAIR - The timing was a bit awkward but we did give people opportunities beyond that time, acknowledging it was -

Mr RICHARDSON - And I was one of them which I thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR - It was Christmas coming. Does anyone have any other questions?

Mr WILLIE - We have heard a bit about what you think should happen at Macquarie Point. I am interested in your views on the stadium, whether that should happen

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somewhere else, or what your views are on the football team, whether you support the football team without the stadium?

Mr RICHARDSON - Alastair Clarkson and the Hawthorn coach, after the match up here about three years ago, what did they say? York Park is the best Australian Rules football stadium in Australia.

Mr WILLIE - The surface, yes. They talk about the playing surface.

Mr RICHARDSON - They can get up to 20,000 there and I would imagine a fraction of what is being proposed and it is not needed. I can't see the point. The beauty about York Park, it is a maximum of about 200 km in all directions. The trouble with Hobart, if you look at the demographics of the State, it is right at one end. People might be interested but I have statistics from the Premier's Department last year. There were 570,000-odd people in Tasmania. When I put Glenorchy, Kingborough, Clarence and Hobart municipalities together it was 203,000, 35 per cent, but that includes Richmond and Campania and Bruny Island; it is probably less than 200,000.

I did the sums when I became a councillor 20-something years ago. The demographic centre, if everybody travelled to a point and the least amount of travel was involved, the demographic centre of Tasmania was?

CHAIR - Erriba.

Mr RICHARDSON - Carrick.

CHAIR - Are you counting King Island? Don't forget the islands.

Mr RICHARDSON - Yes, absolutely. I counted them and it was Carrick. I would guess it is probably now south of Perth.

Mr WILLIE - So you support the AFL team and you think York Park can be -

Mr RICHARDSON - If it is sustainable.

CHAIR - Do you believe it can be sustainable?

Mr RICHARDSON - I think it would be questionable. Eddie McGuire is saying the same and I think he knows a bit about running AFL football. It would be good if it happened because no other team in the AFL competition is funded and run by a State Government.

In the case of the Gold Coast, that was funded by Christopher Skase. In the case of Brisbane, the AFL did that because they transferred Fitzroy. Sydney, when South Melbourne was transferred up there. I don't know of any of them where there is significant State Government involvement in funding or running. That is different. It's not a model that won't work. I don't know. I think there is a lot of work to be done on it because running an AFL club now is about \$50 million a year. That's the figures I got from various clubs and their memberships start from about 50,000 up to 100,000, that's what a current AFL club has.

Mr WILLIE - You mean members?

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Mr RICHARDSON - Yes. That is the basis because you are guaranteed bums on seats for your home grounds.

Mr WILLIE - Do you think the stadium proposal will impact the membership? Do you think there may be people who may not want to sign up because of the way the AFL has treated Tasmania?

Mr RICHARDSON - Or, the other angle to look at is, they didn't even ask in this report, they did not ask how many existing members of existing AFL clubs there are and would they maintain their loyalty with Carlton, with Footscray?

Mr WILLIE - St Kilda.

Mr RICHARDSON - Would they maintain those memberships? Would they have two memberships? That wasn't canvassed. That is poor research because it is vital in terms of how the thing will run.

Mr WILLIE - In the short term, yes. You think generations more -

Mr RICHARDSON - Generations it might be, but how long are you going to carry things for?

In terms of AFL football, I noticed yesterday they found one of my old football team mates and interviewed him. He was a bit better at playing football than I was, Royce Hart, a lot better.

CHAIR - A bit better than a lot of people.

Mr RICHARDSON - He was superb. Even back at Clarence High School back in the 1960s.

CHAIR - Any other questions anyone? Thank you for your time today, Mr Richardson. I appreciate your insights and the different perspective you have provided to us today.

Dr BROAD - And also for a hand-written submission, that must have taken -

Mr RICHARDSON - I don't type. I can write an 80,000-word submission from go to whoa without a mistake if I handwrite it. If I had to hunt and peck, it is not going to happen. Everything I do is handwritten. In fact, it was Senator Anne Urquhart who once rang me at 9:30 pm and said I have just got to my mailbox and found your handwritten letter.

CHAIR - Thank you.

The witness withdrew.

The Committee suspended at 2:25 pm.