

Submission to the Public Accounts Committee, Parliament of Tasmania

Re: Proposal to build a Stadium at Macquarie Point

As a resident of Hobart for a total of 59 years, I love this city for its livability, its community and its fantastic location.

The proposal to construct a “multipurpose” stadium on the prime fore-shore location of Macquarie Point is not only bad for its lack of suitability to the area, it is also totally wrong because the location has been dictated by a large sporting organization, namely the AFL. Whoever heard of a government elected by the people being dictated to by an unelected organization which is solely concerned with one sporting code and growing the wealth and prominence of that one sporting code? It would be laughable if it was not a serious miscarriage of public policy, or lack of any concern for the public who will bear the cost of this folly.

I realise that some groups in the community are in favour of the stadium being built at Macquarie Point. This is largely because the AFL has cunningly linked the stadium to a Tasmanian AFL team. The AFL is telling Tasmanians that they can't have a team without the stadium at Macquarie Point. This is serious blackmail, but the government has fallen for it, and is grovelling at the feet of the almighty AFL. Again, this would be laughable if it wasn't so insane. I understand that many people are followers of AFL and dearly want a team, but at what cost?

If the AFL had not dictated its terms in such an underhand manner, there would have been room for negotiations around upgrades to existing stadia or a new stadium in a more suitable location.

Why is Macquarie Point unsuitable for the proposed stadium? Before even considering the design of the stadium, which may well turn out to be an eyesore, it is obvious that the proposed build just does not fit. It would overshadow the Cenotaph and the heritage buildings along Hunter Street. Macquarie Point is a prime site, but it deserves enhancement rather than destruction of its potential.

Not only will the proposed stadium spoil the Macquarie Point precinct, it will cost the Tasmanian public a huge amount of money which could be better spent improving the quality of life of all, rather than just a minority. The cost of the

build will, without a doubt, blow out. Virtually no major projects come in on budget. In the current economic climate, and for the foreseeable future, Tasmanians could be counting the cost of the government's folly. At this point, it would be fair to say that the income brought in by the stadium is highly unlikely to exceed the cost of building it. It is the kind of facility which would be unused for large periods of time, but which would still require maintenance. Thus, we have not only the cost of building it, but the cost of upkeep to consider. Compare this with the Hobart Aquatic Centre for instance. The Aquatic Centre costs enormous amount to maintain, but it is used virtually every day of the year. It brings benefits in terms of people's health and wellbeing. It would be good if another such facility could be built in the greater Hobart area, but instead the government would rather see an expensive, underused stadium inserted into a too-small area on the waterfront.

There are other serious matters to be considered as well: access and transport for occasional huge (if, indeed they do come) numbers of people on a sporadic basis. There is also the question of where the workforce will come from? Where are the workers with the necessary skills? Are they available locally? If not, where will the workers and their families live, if they have to be brought in from interstate or overseas? Of course, any large infrastructure project would face these issues. The project has to justify the cost. It has to be vital and beneficial. I have serious doubts about the costs of this proposal versus the benefits as touted by the AFL and its sycophant, the Tasmanian government.

I say, why should Tasmanians be saddled with this "white elephant"? The alternative could be a precinct for arts and culture and community gathering, not to mention the possibility of medium density housing. In this way, a "dead" area could become an asset for all, rather than a burden for all. It could be used all year round, rather than just for occasional events.

Thank you for reading my submission

Sincerely

Paula Woodward