

Sir/Madam,

I am writing to tell you why I oppose building of a stadium within the Mac Point precinct.

I am a Tasmanian citizen who is fully aware of the woeful state of our hospitals, health system, education problems and homelessness. I am amazed that the minority Liberal government of Tasmania is flying such a ridiculous concept in light of the problems that we have now and the even greater problems that will arise from this twisted deal from following up on this demand by a bullying AFL.

Tasmania doesn't need a new stadium. Its imposition as a starting premise for all debate is a nonsense.

The survey on your website is completely inadequate in failing to ask for feedback beyond seeking ideas for 'activating' the surrounding zones. It's contemptuous of those whose feedback was ignored in the last round of consultations.

Respondents are being asked to give advice regarding these zones with the stadium presented as a *fait accompli*. This is devious as it implies that respondents are in favour of the stadium itself. I have personally experienced this strategy previously with the attempt to impose a maximum-security prison on my home town of Westbury. The government are not even varying their strategies.

The deletion of the stadium from the precinct plan would greatly improve the plans. Then there would be sufficient space for other activities to operate sustainably and at a scale that won't ruin this historic area.

The government have once again gone ahead without seeking community agreement with this idea that has been imposed by a grasping AFL.

The stadium comes to us at the dictate of the AFL, a multi-million dollar corporate.

The government should not be dictated to by an organisation on their insistence on the Macquarie Point location. The AFL has no qualifications or expertise in planning or social design. There have been several previous proposals for this precinct with far more integrity.

Tasmania doesn't need a costly 3rd stadium.

The design professions of Town Planning, Landscape Architecture and Architecture all teach that the starting point for a project is to define a problem and its functional requirements (that is its size, potential impacts and their costs), and only then to identify a site fit for purpose. The Government's Draft Precinct Plan for Macquarie Point demonstrates the disaster that we face when this well-established process is ignored.

The AFL – not known for its town planning prowess – demanded Mac Point as its chosen location. The Government agreed. Together, they have now set about trying to fit their problem into the site and to solve all the unforeseen constraints of the location, while placing the cost burden on the community. The student, after attempting such reverse engineering, would flunk - as have the stadium's proponents.

The cabinet has not approved the AFL agreement before it was signed.

There was no Treasury advice to support the project.

The project's development has been shrouded in secrecy, to the point two government members left their party to sit in parliament as Independents.

The government's promotion of the project has been misleading / its stadium images are manipulated and misleading.

Tasmania has a questionable record in working within well-designed planning systems but this project is marked by unprecedented failures in transparency, independence and vision.

Have we ever been presented with a project less defined, more poorly costed and less connected with what Tasmanians expressly stated they wanted for this site?

We had a plan for the site

Tasmanians wanted that plan.

Tasmanians had ownership of that plan.

Tasmanians were properly consulted about that plan.

Ignores prevailing economic conditions

Infrastructure projects under review as not affordable.

Growing list of cost blowouts on major infrastructure projects.

Labour shortages in the construction industry (remember the RHH).

Where are the interstate / international workers going to live?

Illegal under Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme / Bad town planning

The stadium is illegal under the prevailing Planning Scheme, set up to protect the unique values of the Sullivans Cove area.

This project clearly fails to comply with the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme. It breaches many of the principles of the scheme, designed to protect the cultural heritage of Hobart's waterfront precinct.

The Draft Precinct Plan clearly demonstrates the stadium site's isolation from the CBD by the Brooker and the Tasman Highways. To overcome the separation, massive un-costed works are required. For instance, the plan shows a bridge from Collins Street spanning the two highways to reach Mac Point. Such a bridge will minimally cost \$30M (based on the price for the Remembrance Bridge, which was shorter and had the advantage of topography, yet cost \$11M in 2018). Who pays for that?

The Draft Precinct Plan sees the Cenotaph shadowed by the stadium to the south, bordered by the new major roadway for log trucks to the east and north and some fancy apartments to be built to the north of the Regatta Ground. It will diminish the Cenotaph and its surrounds. The themes of the area – aboriginal history and occupation, commemoration of those who died in wars, and the views to the mountain and Derwent River – could be united in a magnificent vision. But this draft precinct plan is not it. It is a planning disaster.

There is no mention of what amenity the community loses.

Imagine sitting in the Regatta Pavilion watching the regatta or another event when a log truck rolls by in front of you. Indeed will you even be able to see the races with the proposed housing precinct in the way?

And what a failure of planning to put housing in such an isolated location. The Regatta Point apartments are cut off from services and are in the wrong place; they should be at Mac Point, complementing mixed housing and services, and an aboriginal cultural centre. It is an enclave in the making, with all the attendant social issues.

A transport nightmare

No public transport feeds to this site.

The stadium will create a traffic nightmare.

Concentrating activity in such a confined area, on a headland, creates massive transport and communication infrastructure problems, isolated as it is from the CBD by the existing convoluted road network at that point in the city's traffic grid.

The traffic concept plan shows a reconstruction of the access from the Tasman highway to service Macquarie wharf. This proposed road into the port will separate the Domain from the foreshore. Yet, this is one of the last locations where the Domain—and thus the public, especially those who fish there or launch boats and kayaks—has direct access to the water without having to cross a major/heavy vehicle road.

This and other access works will cost further hundreds of millions of Tasmanian taxpayers' money. Yet, as with so much of this project, no mention is made of the cost. No mention is made of the disruption to traffic on the Tasman highway, Tasmania's busiest arterial road, as this construction proceeds over several years. If you thought traffic in Hobart was bad, get ready for far, far worse.

Bad design

The stadium adversely impacts on the cultural heritage and reverential ambience of the Hobart Cenotaph. The stadium does not fit on the site.

The prevailing planning scheme specifically precludes development that overwhelms the historic spaces and buildings. By the government's own assessment, it is over 40 metres high. The latest version of the Draft Precinct Plan does not reveal the height of the stadium. This tells all of us that it is problematic.

Digitally-rendered images already published by Our Place reveal a build that fully overwhelms this historic site in our capital city.

The stadium destroys Sullivans Cove heritage.

The stadium is plonked on a major heritage site.

The stadium obliterates the site.

Macquarie Point is completely unsuitable for a structure of these dimensions.

The site is too small to comfortably accommodate a stadium footprint this size.
The foundations/substrate will not take the weight, without extensive and costly geo-engineering.

The surrounding structures – commercial, residential, hotels, parks etc - are compromised by the location of the stadium shoehorned into the centre of the site, with unpleasantly narrow access ways between it and the IXL precinct and the northern shoreline.

Architecturally, if the 'artist's impression' is anything to go by, these images look like a sad nod to some retro 1950s design aesthetic, an era that is irrelevant to the history of this site, as well as completely antithetical to the HCC planning scheme, which makes a point of stepping back facades above street level to avoid the wind tunnel effect of high hard corners.

With regard to the existing buildings on Evans Street, a structure to their north at twice their height will block their solar access, casting them into deep shade for much of the year, so showing them as fronting a tree-lined boulevard is pure fantasy.

The image deliberately diminishes the height of the stadium at the end of the pedestrian mall, and completely omits its impact further down Evans Street in the perspective.

The Gasworks chimney (33m high) is a useful indicator of both the southern perimeter of the stadium and its height, albeit 7m lower than the minimum height for a stadium of this capacity. It doesn't require a lot of imagination to take a line of sight from it to predict the impact of the stadium on any location in the vicinity. The sort of trickery used here demeans those from whom you are seeking a considered response.

All views to and from the Cenotaph and the historic waterfront will be obliterated by a stadium in this location – another insult.

One of the key criticisms to date has been that the stadium's height – put by the government at 40m, but by leading architects and the RSL at somewhere between 45m and 55m – will tower over the nearby heritage buildings in Sullivans Cove. Yet, despite lots of glossy pages on stadia footprints and the like from the government, the word "height" is mentioned just once in the draft precinct plan. It's on the last page under

“Next Steps”. There we are told that further planning will be done to set the “parameters” for height and design considerations. This is disingenuous. The government knows the height, because the height governs the size and footprint of the stadium.

The scale of the proposed stadium impinges on the Royal Engineers building, on the Cenotaph and on the heritage listed Regatta Pavilion. It towers over the heritage buildings of Hunter Street and Sullivans Cove. Yet, we’re told on the last page this will all be dealt with as part of setting “parameters”. This sounds about as hopeful a statement as the Premier saying he will make the AFL draft next year. And as ludicrous.

A financial risk

The stadium has not been adequately costed.

The stadium will lose \$300 million over 10 years.

The stadium is a financial risk for taxpayers (we will pay for overruns and time penalties).

The business case for the proposed Mac Point stadium doesn’t stack up.

The Government’s own Reports demonstrate conclusively that a stadium at Macquarie Point is not a financially viable project – the business case just doesn’t stack up.

The cost-benefit analysis (CBA) ‘base-case scenario’ concludes that the project has a Net Present Value (NPV) of – \$301.3 million and a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 0.51. Every dollar spent on the Stadium Project returns a benefit of just 51 cents. Over its life the stadium delivers to the public a net loss of \$301.3 million. State Treasuries insist on a BCR >1 for a project to be considered financially viable.

What are the public infrastructure costs for Hobart City Council to integrate the site in the city?

What are the congestion costs from traffic jams on the Davey, Macquarie & Brooker road network?

What are the disruption costs from noise, waste and congestion during the construction phase?

The value of land at Mac Point is not accounted for in the quantification of project costs.

The Commonwealth’s \$240m “grant” will come out of the state’s GST allocation, so is not a grant at all.

The Stadium cost is 14% of the State’s entire budget.

The cost will inevitably blow out

- estimated to cost \$750m as of mid-2022
- construction costs are rising at about 15% each year
- all big projects see large cost escalations.

The real cost will be \$1.2 – \$1.5billion.

The Rockliff stadium has nothing to commend it. On current figures, Tasmanians are told \$750 million will come out of the State budget to pay for the stadium. This figure is already outdated. Some economists estimate the project will blow out to cost approximately \$1.2 billion. Tasmania cannot afford it. Tasmania should not want to afford it.

Opportunity costs

The Government’s own Reports ‘base case’ assumes that, without a Stadium precinct, nothing will be built on the Macquarie Point site. But the ultimate reason the project is so destructive of social and economic value is that a sportsground better sited elsewhere, and inappropriate for this unique harbourside site adjacent to Hobart’s iconic waterfront and the inner city, would prevent this area from being transformed into a visionary and iconic place for Hobart, and for Tasmania – a place that potentially provides for housing, focuses on reconciliation, and celebrates the site’s attributes with its proximity to the river, its mountain views and Aboriginal history. This is the alternative option that a properly conducted cost benefit analysis ought to consider.

The stadium robs Tasmanians of all opportunities provided by a prime waterfront site in their capital city.

The Aboriginal Culturally Informed Zone looks like an afterthought, squeezed in between the stadium and the busiest road network in Hobart, and is, quite frankly, an insult.

The stadium ends the prospect of an Aboriginal reconciliation park.

The stadium dismisses Aboriginal reconciliation (perverts a site to jam in an “Aboriginal culturally informed zone” in place of a central truth and reconciliation art park).

We are told there is to be an “aboriginal culturally informed zone”. This has all the appearances of being utterly tokenistic—presumably Tasmanian Aboriginal people will be informed about what they are going to have to accept in place of the reconciliation park proposal they created and led. It ignores the recommendation from Professors Warner and McCormack in their Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty Report to the Premier of the day in 2021 for an Aboriginal owned, run and managed Aboriginal cultural centre at Mac Point. Instead, it looks like aboriginal values are part of a small and malleable avenue separating the stadium from Davey Street. In fact, we are told it is the primary “address” to the Mac Point precinct and the interface to the Hobart CBD. Perhaps it would have been more accurate to simply write “we had to put it somewhere”.

The stadium precinct plan fails to include and accommodate an Aboriginal reconciliation component in a meaningful or sensitive way. It will become a superficial interface between the stadium and the Tasman Highway, rather than a space for reflection or contemplation as originally conceived. This could not be further removed from best practice planning.

What we could spend money on

The Commonwealth’s \$240m will mean \$240m less on housing / health / education.

Tasmania can’t afford the opportunity costs of spending \$700M+ on an underused facility when there are more important budgetary needs in health , in housing and in education.

The likely \$1.5 billion for the stadium (plus transport infrastructure costs) would best be directed to more pressing needs. That is, housing, funding for our education and health systems and redress for survivors of institutional childhood sexual abuse.

Tasmanians want government funds directed towards addressing well-identified shortcomings in housing, health, education - not a stadium that has no grounding in community consultation and no connection with community need.

Conclusion

On review of the Draft Precinct Plan, it is obvious to see that the proposed stadium is a ‘round peg’ being forced into a ‘square hole’. It doesn’t fit, we can’t afford it and there are better ways to use the space and funds.

The draft plan is basically untruthful.

The Government and the AFL need to go back to Town Planning, Landscape Architecture and Architecture 101 and begin by finding a site better suited to a stadium. Then, when we know the real costs and the impacts on our community, we can talk.

And we will want to be heard on the real issues this whole debacle raises - not on sideline issues couched as survey questions about “activating” a site that assumes a stadium is to be plonked on it, thus deviously representing respondents as supportive of the stadium itself.

Peter Wileman

