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### **THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT GEORGE TOWN COUNCIL, ANNE STREET, GEORGE TOWN, ON TUESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2013**

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#### **GEORGE TOWN HUB**

**Dr SENNIN CHARLES** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Dr Charles, hanks for being prepared to appear before the committee today. We have your written submission, and committee members have familiarised themselves with that. We are certainly happy to hear evidence from you which may raise other questions than might already be arising from your submission.

**Dr CHARLES** - Ladies and gentlemen, we're here in part to consider the worth or otherwise of putting a building on an historic square. There is also another inconvenient historic fact, which is that the town square has never on a daily basis operated as a town square in its somewhat 200 years of existence.

There is also an issue I alluded to in my submission. That is about what can and can't be on the square. We've got an extended hall now with sporting facilities in it; we have a parking lot you would've seen today where the intended building goes. It is a bus parking lot, and we've got a parking lot that apparently must be preserved as a use of that hall.

What we don't want are facilities for those people here on our historic town hall, particularly when those people can have their facilities somewhere else - presumably down there where they live, and perhaps belong.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you for your submission. Is it your belief that you entrench the disadvantage if you have services located outside of the city hub? We talked about towns dying across Australia when you remove critical elements of the services delivered to that town, even if it's beyond one block from the centre of the town. Could you elaborate on that? I understand it was a main point in your submission.

**Dr CHARLES** - The point I was making there is not just that it would affect the disadvantaged; it would also affect the rest of the town. If you move it a block away, you are drawing people away from what I call the high street - but that is a part of my English background. So, it is not just the disadvantaged that you would disadvantage, you would affect the whole life structure of the town, including the people who have invested in businesses on the street who are struggling. As you draw stuff away, you kill that high street. Once that high street starts to die, it is a spiral that just goes down and down. So, the point of it having to be on the street is not just that it is a facility for everybody and should be located on there, it is also trying to preserve integrity of this town, including the commercial integrity. Does that answer your question?

**Ms WHITE** - Yes, it does answer my question, thank you. Dr Charles, it mentions that you have had involvement in LINC for quite a while. Were you engaged in any of the

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consultation that occurred with the town about the development of the hub? Could you detail any of that if you were?

**Dr CHARLES** - Sorry, I am not too sure what you are asking me.

**Ms WHITE** - Have you been consulted by anyone regarding the proposal to build a hub in the location that has been identified? It says here that you have been involved in LINC for a number of years,

**Dr CHARLES** - I have been extensively involved. I was consulted by LINC. I have complained to them when I have not thought that things were right; I have sought my own answers on matters. I have also been involved with people who are against the project. Some of them I would not say are good friends, but certainly I talk to them. Just because I disagree does not mean to say that I do not talk to them. I was also involved with members of the historical society, not because I agreed with their position but because they were complaining that nobody was listening to them and that they had a view to put forward. I feel that it is a fundamental right of people of a community to be able to do that, regardless of whether I agree or disagree with their view. So I facilitated and was invited to participate in those discussions. So I am intimately familiar with their views even though I had another view on the matter. Your right to be heard differs from the view that you are putting forward in there. It is a subtle distinction which some people have not quite grasped.

**Mr BROOKS** - I just wanted to go back over some of the history of what you see it was intended for; also now with the demographics and the changing society and economy, where you see it will be in the future. To follow up from that, you have mentioned supporting the CBD and the business community, I have had some representation from business and they think it will impede their business. I would like your thoughts on that too.

**Dr CHARLES** - I will start at the end, unlike Alice. I was involved with the debate with the Chamber of Commerce. I do not know which businesses spoke to you and I do not know what they said. I can just say that I was involved with Commerce and that was discussed in an evening debate - myself for, and a fairly well-informed opponent whom I talked to, against. It was a very vigorous debate; the issue that you have missed that I alluded to in my opening statement certainly came up then about having those sort of people up here in the town; yes, it has come up all the time. But the point that I made to them about having everything in one central place - 'survive or die in a city' - was well take, eventually. Perhaps I'll be cynical; perhaps for that reason alone they decided to support the building, and it was a qualified support. They supported the building and later they supported the building to be on the main street, thereby avoiding, quite cleverly, the issue of getting involved in the square. I probably would have done the same thing in their place also. They agreed with me and agreed publicly. I cannot comment without knowing more on individual representation. I don't know whether it was a 100 per cent agreement. Even in your business, 100 per cent agreement is very rare -

**Mr BROOKS** - Very rare indeed. I would like your thoughts on the changes from the original intention of the square and obviously the demographics, the way society is now and the impact that had on the original plans with the council.

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**Dr CHARLES** - The square is huge; it was designed for the northern city. This building that we sit in is a little vestigial remnant of that dream. We were to have the public buildings, the civic building surrounding the square and you were to go in and enjoy the square during - I lived in Sydney and that's how buildings work in Sydney, that sort of thing. Come lunchtime in big cities, everybody goes and enjoys it. It's not a right or wrong, it's not good or bad; it didn't happen for whatever reason and the little remnant we've got is this building. Part of that dream was the land around it and the buildings that were going to be around it. That was sold off - so that was all right to do that. That was part of the form and function of the square. The square as a town square is a big city square. It never happened. It was a football ground for a while. It's a parking lot now. Perhaps I am showing my age but in the 1960s, when you put up a parking lot, it's over. It never happened. That is not a blame, it's just an historical fact.

Now, 200 years later, what are we going to do about it? How are we going to interpret somebody's vision then with what we have now? Do we freeze it and say, 'Well, this little patch here, you have already done quite a lot, you have put up quite a big hall but no brick further'? Is that a legitimate interpretation of that original dream or do you say: 'Fine, we've got a proposal now for the people of this town. What was originally intended and what is proposed? Let's put them together and see if this is in keeping with the original offer. Is it an expectation of what the people want and need - not now but now and into the future?' Are we talking about a McDonald's? Are we talking about a fast food place? No, and if we were I would be saying, 'No, don't do it'. We are not talking about flogging it off for commercial rights, we are talking about a building that's going to serve the two George Towns. For those of you who don't know, there are two towns here and only one of them is largely represented today.

Is it going to be a facility for everybody across all demographics - social, age, financial et cetera - or is it going to be a windfall for the people who happen to live around the square and happen to quite enjoy being here and those people down there can please stay down there? I think it's a legitimate question to ask and it's a difficult question, I admit, but given what it is and given the need, yes, there is a problem in George Town. There are problems everywhere. It's not the problem we want to know about, it's how you are going to fix it. This building is trying to fix it. It's going to take a long time - 20 years or 30 years. I had thought it wouldn't be in my lifetime but your lot have canned the voluntary euthanasia bill so I might live to see the results after all.

*Laughter.*

**Dr CHARLES** - But that's the sort of time scale we are talking about. Yes, there is a problem and it keeps emerging. This is something to fix it, and is it in keeping with the original intentions of 200 years ago when online centres and these sorts of things could not have been imagined and the city that didn't happen, didn't happen? Is it legitimate to say this interpretation - I put it to you, yes, I think it is a very legitimate use of the square. Does that answer your question? It's for everybody to enjoy and everybody to get a benefit out of it, and that building will make that happen for everybody.

**Mr BROOKS** - Thank you.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you. A fairly brief question. You've explained your position pretty clearly to the panel, so there's probably not much point going over some of those things,

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other than to ask you. You've quoted me more recently in debate of the hub issue, etcetera, and it has been located on the main street, thereby avoiding the issue of the square. Did you have other locations on the main street that you looked at or thought about, other than on the square?

**Dr CHARLES** - Yes, this isn't my area of expertise but I'll answer it as best I can. Other location that have been pointed out to me and I have asked about them. I didn't bring the information with me, but I have seen it. For various reasons it was unacceptable or difficult, including - and I'm going by memory so please don't hold me to it as a fact - but including cost. There's something about governments not having enough to spend on things these days. It's a commercial reality that if you're going to buy a place somewhere else you're going to have to pay for it out of public money. That's another factor. But I'm going my own supposition so please don't hold me to it.

**Mr BOOTH** - What would you say about the reuse and refurbishment of an existing building, or a block that might be available that could be converted at a lower cost, if such were available?

**Dr CHARLES** - If such were available - are we talking hypothetically?

**Mr BOOTH** - Yes.

**Dr CHARLES** - It's very difficult to give you an absolute answer because we're talking hypothetically. But if you can come up with a building that matches that location, and remember - quoting a firm that I mentioned before - it's location, location, location - if you can match that in location and in cost, then fine, let's talk about it, but I haven't seen it. I haven't seen something that would match that. But in principle, of course. That's a reality, yes, of course. The object is about delivering a service. The object is not about trying to destroy something, it's about trying to deliver a service. But the building would have to be an integrated, one-stop shop, absolutely. That is not negotiable.

**Mr BOOTH** - So if such a building was available, then you would accept it actually could be better for the community to buy a dilapidated or redundant building - say redundant building -

**Dr CHARLES** - If you're asking me to commit to a hypothetical question to a design or plan or location that I haven't seen, with respect I find that quite difficult. But in principle, yes, I would certainly be prepared to discuss it. Would I be prepared to commit it? Having lived just about all my life, no is the short answer.

**Mr BOOTH** - I'm not asking you to commit to something that's hypothetical, I'm pointing out that, given your passionate defence of the location, that it's not actually Regent Square that it has to be on, provided a location fitted with the centre of town, the main street is available -

**Dr CHARLES** - It has to be on the main street, not 50 metres, not 100 metres away from the main street. It has to be on the main street. By location, absolutely on the main street. But -

**Mr BOOTH** - But it doesn't have to be on Regent Square.

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**Dr CHARLES** - It doesn't have to be on Regent Square, no, not absolutely does it have to be on Regent Square. If your hypothetical building or location can match those requirements, of course it's a consideration, absolutely. But I can't commit to it unless I see something a little bit more definite.

**Mr BOOTH** - I'm not asking you to commit to it, I'm just asking you to comment on whether it has to be on Regent Square, and you've answered that.

**CHAIR** - I think he has done that.

**Dr CHARLES** - But in principle of what you're asking, of course. Contrary to what you may hear, I am fairly reasonable and open-minded.

**Mr BOOTH** - I've heard nothing to the contrary.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

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**Ms KAREN RABBETT, Dr JANE ZIMMERMAN AND Mr RICHARD NICHOLLS**  
WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much to each of you.

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion and put in my submission. The thrust of my submission really was that, partly due to the historical nature of Regent Square, I thought it should not be destroyed, more from a tourism point of view. In George Town we are losing our manufacturing base as time goes on because it is ageing and not going to be viable for much longer. I think we should be focusing on tourism and the history is an important part of that tourism. We have a beautiful town but if we destroy the centre of it with a huge building people are not going to want to spend time in George Town.

This would also apply to the loss of the parking. If you go to visit a town and don't find a place to park, you don't get out and walk around and see the shops and restaurants. From my point of view, putting it on Regent Square is actually destroying one of our assets. The design of the building is totally not in keeping with the rest of the neighbourhood around it. We have heritage-listed houses, a heritage hotel, we have tourism things, and it just does not fit in. That was the thrust of my submissions.

**Mr HALL** - Dr Zimmerman, you talked about the heritage aspects of the square. Would you also not acknowledge that some of those aspects have been compromised by the buildings that have already been put there. About 14 per cent of the square - from memory - has been taken by that infrastructure, we are now talking about something like another 6 per cent to go there, so in total it is about 20 per cent. Do you really think that is going to make an inordinate difference to tourism and the amenity of the square?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - I take your point. Yes, there are buildings on the square already, but I wouldn't want to see any more buildings put on the square. It will block off the view from the main street if people are driving down to see if there's a park in behind there. It butts almost right up onto Elizabeth Street and is just too big for the part of the square it's on, in my opinion. It is blocking off the view of the park you get from the main street.

**Mr BROOKS** - I had a couple of questions about your submission. In point 1 of your submission it says it will greatly diminish the area available and valuable central parkland setting. Do you that consider that to be really greatly diminished, given it's an extra 6 per cent?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Yes, I do. Six per cent doesn't sound like a lot but it is when you look at it. Basically, you still want the view of the park from the main street. The gist of my submission was that you're taking that little 6 per cent and it doesn't sound like much but you're losing the vista and the parkland where people might want to spend some time.

**Mr BROOKS** - I think you raise a fair point in point 3, which is about the concept of moving both the library and Service Tas from their current sites which would leave more unutilised space. I understand that, and there are some questions the committee will need to determine on space available, but it's more about your final point 4 and the last sentence in that - 'If construction of the hub proceeds it will block Regent Square off

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from the Macquarie-Elizabeth Street precinct to the detriment of the whole area'. I know you briefly touched on that with Mr Hall but, again, it doesn't really block it off completely, does it?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Pretty close. If you were standing on the corner you're just going to see a great big building that goes down a considerable distance. You're not going to be able to look across from the corner into a park anymore.

**Mr BROOKS** - I went there this morning; I had breakfast in George Town and wandered around on my own, and there's a whopping great bus parked there and a bunch of cars in that area.

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - We do need that car parking. I'm not in favour of the bus parking there but I guess it's got to park someplace.

**Mr BROOKS** - This isn't an attack on the bus driver.

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Not at all.

**Mr BROOKS** - More about your argument that it will change the outlook. It's already changed.

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Yes, but we don't want to change it anymore. We don't want to make it worse than it already is. I think part of Regent Square has already been denigrated, almost, by the second building that was put on, which really doesn't even fit in with the first building, but that's an entirely different subject. The other issue about the parking is that when we have events in those places, there may not be sufficient parking. I'm thinking things like the George Town folk festival when we need lots of parking, or if we have concerts there. People who have disabilities are going to have to either not go or go much further. It is losing that bit of parking as well, and that bus is only there during the daytime. At night when you're having functions you really want as much parking as you can get.

**Mr BOOTH** - You live diagonally opposite the proposed development site.

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - I do.

**Mr BOOTH** - What sorts of activities occur on Regent Square that would be adversely affected as a result of another building being put there?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - When we have schoolchildren come and do things for George Town on Show and whatnot, it might impact on that. I have to admit that the square is not utilised as much as it could be, but I think that's also partly because it really hasn't been developed as a nice park and it's not kept up very well anymore so it's not conducive to use. Leaving it as a park, it is going to have to be improved as a park. I'm part of Soroptimists and we donated 25 trees to be planted. I think most of them have died.

**Mr BOOTH** - Would the folk festival be compatible with the CFC and access to -

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**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - I think there's going to be trouble with the parking and I don't know if the CFCs are going to be doing anything on weekends or not. Certainly on the Friday when people are having things, it will have an impact, I think.

**Mr BOOTH** - As a doctor or a health professional, are you in favour of the child and family centre being provided for your community?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Yes. This town needs it. As the previous speaker said, we have problems in this town and people who would really benefit from it; I just don't agree with it being on Regent Square.

**Mr BOOTH** - In your view, is the amount of money budgeted for this in terms of constructing a hub prudent expenditure of public money?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - To my mind, it isn't. I think if we didn't already have the spaces for the services that they want to move, then a hub is a great idea. But it's not like they have to walk very far - even though they have to walk across the street to get to Service Tasmania here. The library would be like, I don't know, a few feet away practically, and the on-line centre ditto. Why move them out of there? As a ratepayer, I really don't like to see a lot of empty space that the town has to maintain and I think that's my objection to the hub here. Someplace else if you were starting from scratch - it would be a great idea.

**Mr BOOTH** - Part of it is a duplication of current services?

**Dr ZIMMERMAN** - Definitely.

**Ms RABBETT** - I think we are all on the same theme of duplication of services. I have just a few little things I would like to expand on, if I could. In the letter here from Lara Giddings dated 30 September 2013, it says: 'The central location of the hub will give residents easy access to improved services that will make a real difference in the health and wellbeing of the local community'.

We have a new hospital within 120 metres of this hub. This building does not offer any health or wellbeing that isn't already available in the town. Since this application has been received, Service Tasmania has had its hours cut; more and more services are on-line and it won't be long until its closed and you have to travel to Launceston. Why create a new building to have more empty space?

There is a notation here in the *Tamar Times* November 2012 where the mayor writes that he attended the LINC Tasmania launch of the 26TEN program that highlights the adult literacy program for some 47 people experiencing difficulties. This service already exists in town and it's up and running. There is no need to move it 20 metres to the left.

Tourism. The on-line search of Wikipedia George Town, regarding our claim to fame with the pulp mill, says:

The Tasmanian community became divided on its merits due to the environmental concerns and the proponent getting the development fast-



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tracked through parliament, sidestepping Tasmania's established planning and environment regulations.

Well, here we go again - sidestepping regulations, changing planning and rezoning just so that you could build another building to duplicate services we already have.

A lack of consultation has been a major problem for the people of Georgetown, as per the extract outlined in the hospital development, which I outlined in my representation. But regarding this project for the hub, the people who went to the George Town Council and looked at the plans and made inquiries regarding the hub were, at the insistence of the DPP, pointed out and named at the TPC hearing. That was nothing short of an aggressive attack on us by the DPP. It was a public consultation. We are not allowed to look at the plans. They have been changed over and over again. The plan out there now is not the plan that the council ruled on; yet we are not allowed to look at it.

On a personal note, I have recently built a house in George Town and it took us 53 days from the time our application was put over to the council until council stamped and signed and issued a BA - 53 days. That's fine; those are the rules and we went through and did it. This \$6.9 million proposal took five days to go through council. It was received on the Friday morning; the planner did her reports and evaluation risks, put it on the agenda on the Friday and it was voted on the next Wednesday. Five days for \$6.9 million!

The George Town Council's final submission by Geoff Davis is here and Mr Davis wrote:

It is suggested that the wording requiring further approval from the council be changed to reference the council Director of Infrastructure and Development Service as being the approval person.

Why can't this go back to the elected nine councillors for deliberation? Something is wrong there.

The TPC hearing. The planner testified to the TPC hearing that she was rushed, did not do her best work and made errors, but would not say how all this came about. The TPC could not follow up on these concerns as it was not in their brief. All of this process still remains speculative at best.

The car parking. I have issued you with a three-page attachment that I wanted to draw reference from. On the last page, item B, in February 2007, regarding George Town Memorial Hall redevelopment project, the council created a reference group. The next page refers to 2011 - that is five years that we have waiting for a car park. This letter is signed by the general manager who accepted condition 14 - on-site parking is ongoing to council consideration. That is five years we have waited for the car park to be finished.

In 2012, the mayor and general manager put out a Christmas letter to the staff and referred to this car park, which we have paid a lot of money for, as being stuck with a tardy space which is currently used for overflow parking.

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In 2013, the submission to the TPC by Geoff Davis shows that the parking design plan in condition 14, originally submitted to council in the hearing, shows the location of a parking space on the site allocated for the hub. Why? Because it is car park. It's for campervans, coaches and for tourists. We are paying for it and we would like it finished.

George Town CFC currently, as reported to the TPC, only needs a stand-alone building. It was also introduced today - pram power. The mums who don't have vehicles take their prams and their children up to the school. They then have to walk all the way back down to the hub - which is 1.7 kilometres from the Google directory - to attend a course or obtain information. Then they have to push their prams 1.7 kilometres back to collect their children. Why not build it on Education department land in the school precinct?

For all the time, effort and money spent by our council and the government on fighting the ratepayers of George Town who want to protect Regent Square, this facility could have been built twice over. There is another letter here, reading from the *Hansard* on Wednesday 28 August where Ms O'Byrne states to the House that she is the lead minister for the George Town hub project. So she must take full responsibility for the division in the town. She felt the need to bring two plain-clothes policewomen to town with her when she attended a fund-raising morning tea for the Ainsley Retirement Village - a waste of resources.

From this morning's hearings, I have just picked up a couple of risks. This new plan that has been done by Mr Clayton on behalf of the Education Department shows that it has a very sophisticated, modern, wonderful playground area that is only opened on weekdays to the people who use the centre. I see that this is going to be a source of attraction for children on the weekends; they are going to want to get in there and play because the council provided playground is not very good. So it is going to be an attraction for children. Are they going to get impaled on the fencing? Are they going to be reported to the police for breaking in? It is an issue that really should be looked at.

Another interesting point is that the plans approved by council in October 2012 have been superseded time and time again. This plan that is proposed to be built now is not what they authorised, so I think there is something wrong there.

As for using local tradespeople, it has been identified that the only benefit to the town is an increased sale in pies.

Adult courses on education. The Education Department keeps pushing that this is to educate people. Well, if you drive around town there are buildings for educating people and they are called schools; they could be utilised for adult education. I went to night school; I got a degree out of night school and somebody could learn to read at night as well.

As for medical services, there is a hydro pool in town and it is up in the school precinct area, so that could help mums.

They keep talking about an integrated service. Well, if I was standing at the counter and having trouble filling out a government form and somebody offered me a form or a brochure on an illiteracy program that they are running I think I would be pretty upset.

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So you are really setting up your staff in this area to possibly take more abuse than they would normally get.

I would like to conclude. While it is admirable that people dedicate themselves to the education of children and to the creators of new programs for the zero-to-five age group, it is the implementation of the program and not the location of a building that determines a successful outcome. While we spend so much time on catering for the young, let us take a moment to think about the elderly. I have been asked to consider the 50s, 60s and 70s residents of George Town who well and truly outnumber us all. What does this building offer them that is not already in town? They need the easy accessible parking more than a new building.

Regent Square was not and is not a vacant block. It has been manipulated and neglected by the George Town Council and given away to the government as waste - and that is a shame.

**Mr HALL** - Thank you for your submission, Karen. I take on board your comments about duplication of facilities and services. I also put it to you that if, hypothetically, this committee approved this particular project and it was built where it is going to be, would that not enhance the central part of George Town? Would it not give it more vibrancy and would it not, in the words of another witness, help preserve the commercial integrity of the town?

**Ms RABBETT** - The Heritage Commission stated in the TPC that the extension to memorial hall is a monstrosity. It is under-utilised because it is a monstrosity. It is an unpleasant building to be in. The windows are slanted and the doors are slanted. You get this 'ugh' feeling when you've been it for a while. It has been reported that there some safety issues. The floor doesn't meet the walls and kids can get their fingers stuck down it, and it really is under-utilised.

You're going to put another building there to match that one and the people who live in this town only have a certain amount of money to spend. They are on fixed incomes and they receive benefits. Building this building on that square does not increase the value to George Town. I only have x amount of money to spend and I'm going to spend it; the building makes no difference. I would rather have a park for the children to play in whilst their mums are in the shops.

**Mr HALL** - You talked about the fact that the plan George Town council actually approved was not the one that they had approved originally - is that what you were saying?

**Ms RABBETT** - No, the plan that they were given in October 2012 is what they voted on and the vote was carried to go ahead. But in the TPC hearing of nine days it was reviewed for nine days. The councillors who were elected to make decisions on behalf of the residents of George Town have not seen and have not voted on any other plan. So, technically, the only one that should be built is the one that they approved..

**Mr HALL** - Are you aware of any substantial changes between the original plan and what was voted on, whichever one it was?

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**Ms RABBETT** - Only from hearsay and from the amendment made by the TPC that the line of delineation has been removed, which means you don't know how much they're taking now. The building per se may have changed. We're not given the opportunity to look at the plan, so how can I answer that question? No-one has been given access to it. As late as last week, people have been denied access to have a look at what they have on file as the latest one. The other thing is that where you may say that there is a bus parked on the square at the moment, that's going to be - according to the last plan we saw on the last day of the TPC - a three-car or two-car permanently-caged house of wire meshing. It's going to be a permanent garage for two of the vehicles that belong to the hub. That's just a blight on the street value of - you're going to drive past and see this big caged area; it's not going to look very good.

**Mr BROOKS** - I disagreed with one of the points you've made. At first I thought it was drawing a long bow, but I would like you to explain it a bit more to me. In it you say the placement of this development on Regent Square would endanger the users of this facility. It is on Macquarie Street, George Town's major road and major event car parking, and will be operating within close proximity of three licensed premises. Can you explain how you feel it would endanger the users?

**Ms RABBETT** - Yes, children run out of doors - and they're running straight into a car park. We saw it several times and it was also pointed out to the ABC-TV crew when they were filming. Mums are way over there and kids are playing on the grass between the library and the hall. That is on the edge of a car park and no-one was watching the children. It has been mentioned and discussed that you can leave your child there - mums, dads, grandparents, keepers, whoever - walk out the front door and be in a pub within 20 metres, and then go back and pick up your kids. The other thing is that the playground area of this facility is going to be run by volunteers, not qualified care workers but volunteers. I wouldn't leave my granddaughter with a volunteer. There are a lot of aspects that could be considered to be risks.

**Mr BROOKS** - In contrast to that, you said earlier in your testimony that you would rather leave your kids in a park and go shopping -

**Ms RABBETT** - Older children, yes.

**Mr BROOKS** - I suppose that is no different to currently where some people can leave their young kids in a park and go to the pub. I would hope no-one would do that but no doubt it may happen, so how is that more or less dangerous if this facility were to go ahead?

**Ms RABBETT** - The current park is a well opened area. You are going to put a right on the corner of two main roads. Parents do leave their kids in parks to go shopping but they are going to think they have the ability to leave a child in a care centre and go shopping. They keep emphasising that this has to be near the shops and that people are going to go shopping and leave their children in the care of a volunteer.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you think that, were it to proceed be built on Regent Square, this would service the main cohort of young families who would use a centre like that, or would there be a better location that would be more central?

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**Ms RABBETT** - As I said earlier, you were talking about mums who are dropping their children at school, then they have to get back in the car or push the pram 1.7 kilometres to come down to do a course, and then they have to get back in the car or walk 1.7 kilometres back to get their children. If you are have children, are doing education and neighbourhood watch and it is all in the one precinct that is already covered by the 40 zone speed limit, it keeps the education of children all in one area.

**Mr BOOTH** - So would you say it is not a convenient location for such a thing?

**Ms RABBETT** - On Regent Square?

**Mr BOOTH** - Yes.

**Ms RABBETT** - I do not think it is appropriate.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given the statements you have made with regard to duplication of services, do you regard the construction of this proposed hub on Regent Square as a prudent use of public funds?

**Ms RABBETT** - No.

**Mr BOOTH** - Would you regard a construction on that site as being fit for purpose, then?

**Ms RABBETT** - No, it is a complete duplication. Why would you move a library from there to there just for the sake of moving a library? We have the LINC there in a nice new building, so why would you move it from there to there? You are moving the hospital services to there, leaving that empty. The ladies at Service Tasmania here are in a building with a safe environment, they are collecting money and it is all safe here. You are going to move them down there to an integrated service you are going to be offering people. I am not quite sure what they really mean by integrated service. Does that mean that the librarian is also going to be issuing my licence, because I do not want the librarian to know that I have been there to see someone about a medical issue or that I am a little bit depressed or I have other money problems? I don't want everyone at every counter to know that or have access to that. That is just really an invasion of privacy. I think if you go and see a doctor, you go and see a doctor. If you go and get a library book, you go and get a library book. You park your car once in George Town and within five minutes you are wherever you want to be.

**Ms WHITE** - You talked about the risk that parents may leave their children unattended. It is not a childcare centre. When we visited the fire station school this morning each parent was in attendance with their child. I would like to ask whether you have visited any child and family centres already operating in the state?

**Ms RABBETT** - Not in this state, no.

**Ms WHITE** - That is interesting. Have you visited any of the hubs that operate in the state?

**Ms RABBETT** - No.

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**Ms WHITE** - I think it highlights that there is a very clear misunderstanding about the point of a child and family centre and how they operate and the intent. It is certainly not to a childcare facility where parents leave their children unattended. The way they operate it that parents are involved; that is why they are called child and family centres.

**Ms RABBETT** - Yes, but where you went this morning you are not able to just duck across the street to Woolworth's, but down here you will be - or could be, I should say.

**Ms WHITE** - Of course, but that is the case in any scenario. The other question I would ask is you talk about it being 1.7 km to, I presume, Port Dalrymple school. How many schools exist here in George Town?

**Ms RABBETT** - Three.

**Ms WHITE** - Therefore wouldn't it be better to locate a service centrally so that every parent has access, not on one particular school site where you might find other parents feel quite unwelcome at that school because their children don't go there? Also this is a zero-to-five centre predominately and not all parents will already have children in schools so they may not be travelling from a school to this centre, they may just be learning about pregnancy and what it is like to become a parent.

**Ms RABBETT** - Well, you specifically highlighted Dalrymple school. I was actually talking about Wattle House and the Neighbourhood House. They are all in that vicinity and a CFC could be easily established up there, not necessarily in Dalrymple school but in that general area where you have your Neighbourhood Watch and your Wattle group and they all offer assistance to young mums and families, as you just outlined. So yes, up there and associated with all those other agency bodies.

**Ms WHITE** - In your opinion, if it were located up there, do you think parents from other schools would feel comfortable using the service if it were located outside the centre of the town?

**Ms RABBETT** - They're going there for a specific reason so why wouldn't people feel comfortable about that?

**Ms WHITE** - I was just asking your opinion about that.

**CHAIR** - Thanks very much, Karen. We will move now to Richard. Again, whilst your submission dot-pointed some matters I am sure you will want to expand on those and give us the opportunity to frame some questions as well.

**Mr NICHOLLS** - I have submitted a dot-point synopsis submission. I have expanded on that, which I have a written copy of. I am not proposing to read all of it out to you now given the time constraints, but I would like to perhaps just read the introduction and conclusion of that report and also draw to your attention that just behind Brian there are two boards. One provides some evidence about the distances and locations of the three sites we have looked at this morning in relation to all of them. I have submitted that as part of my expanded written submission and there is also on those boards a concept design scheme for a stand-alone child and family centre on the third site we looked at

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today which has been called the Anne Street site and is opposite the hospital and community health centre.

It is important to state at the outset that there is a distinction between what is proposed and how this has been portrayed through the debate in the public arena. The current proposal is not for a child and family centre. The current

The current proposal is not for a child and family centre, the current proposal is for a co-located welfare LINC and associated services that includes in part a child and family centre, now conveniently all being referred to as a services hub. The child and family centre only makes up a portion of the proposal. This is distinct from a proposal for a stand-alone child and family centre even on Regent Square. This distinction has been blurred to cause confusion about the proposal. Even now the development is still incorrectly referred to as a child and family centre. This is not the whole picture.

There are two distinct matters that I believe should be considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to this proposal: (1) is the co-location of the proposed services an efficient way of delivering the desired outcomes; and (2) is the proposed development site the best location available to facilitate this service delivery? It is my view that the co-location of the proposed services in this development in George Town is not the most fiscally prudent or efficient way to achieve the desired outcomes. Nor is the proposed development site the most suitable location to achieve the desired outcomes in terms of the first principles.

The intent is to improve the lives of the George Town residents by providing economic, social and cultural stimulation into the region. The proposal is for the community to repair a fragmented and demographically divided community that provides support to disadvantaged parents and their vulnerable children for years to come.

It is my view that the government has used the emotive issue of parents and children to promote their own agenda. The government's active encouragement and polarisation of this issue in George Town has been disgusting. They have used and manipulated vulnerable parents. The reality is the CFC component comprises only approximately 30 per cent of the proposed hub.

We have not seen any of the providers of the other services demonstrate their support for the hub, or even being encouraged to do so by the government. Far from trying to find a solution that addresses the first principle needs and the desires of the wider community, it has actively sought to stifle mediation, public contributions and any effort by all interested parties to explore and develop an alternative to the proposal which would garner the community's full support.

It is my opinion that the community has been held to ransom by the Minister for Children, who on more than one occasion stated that the development is to go on the square or not at all in George Town; it would go to Sorell. Employees within the existing services have received loosely veiled threats that their jobs or services are at risk if they speak out or indeed communicate what the government have been planning behind the scenes.

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You will hear lots of justification from the supporters and proponents of the development - jobs, services, delivery models. Much of this is supported by the wider community. They are also 100 per cent in favour of a child and family centre in George Town.

What you won't hear of or see is any substantive evidence that establishes what unique factors the historic Regent Square site has that supports the argument for the proposed location, and warrants its continued desecration and community division. The desire for the development to be central - I get that. I understand that. But when one actually looks at the evidence for the central argument, the historic Regent Square site is in fact not as central geographically or in terms of the current service provision in the town as other feasible alternatives. I will refer you to those diagrams.

Some would argue that the site is under-utilised and nothing but a gravel patch. Less than six years ago this site was a green open space forming the south-west corner of a public square. It was the action of the council that has already begun to erode the health and wellbeing of the area through the construction of the Memorial Hall extension, coined 'a monstrosity' by Heritage Tasmania's heritage consultant, Ian Boersma.

Then to add insult to injury, there was the non-completion of the development and the failure to maintain and rehabilitate the site area. The argument that the site area is unused is unsound. There has even been some suggestion the proximity to Woolworths supermarket is a justification for the proposed location and subsequently all the anxiety and stress that has been created. Really? What if Woolworths was to be relocated, where does that leave the hub? What about all the parents who shop at the IGA to the north of the town, do they miss out? Any community service provision, whilst funded and supported logistically by the government, invariably relies on community support through volunteers at events and other services around the periphery of any service. George Town has a proud and very well established core of volunteers. They have worked and continue to work tirelessly around a whole range of community programs. Any proposal will require full community support in order to succeed if it is going to even get anywhere close to delivering the services it is intended to.

The proposal does not have the wide community support and does not have a social licence. Ironically, those who have historically volunteered for community programs are in fact those who are actively standing against the current proposal. Many have been insulted by the government's criticism of their sincerity towards achieving best outcomes for George Town.

The proposal relies on a planning scheme amendment to a 23-year-old planning scheme and proposes to deliver a seven-year-old delivery model. How far away from current best practice thinking is this proposal?

In my opinion, the government has actively supported polarisation of this issue unnecessarily. They have used vulnerable young parents to push their own agenda using the emotive issue of parents and children. The proposed development consists of far more than a child and family centre, which only comprises about one-third of the development. I also think it is disgraceful and disgusting that these parents who already have enough stress and anxiety in their lives have been manipulated in this political way. This division is not going to suddenly disappear if the development goes ahead. The division will continue now for years to come.



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The Minister for Children, despite telling parliament that she was exploring alternatives in tandem, has evidently not done so. The government has refused to consider any alternatives that would potentially see the development take place on an alternative site. It is my view that the present government representatives do not care about the parents and children in George Town, if they had they would have worked extensively with the wider community and explored and developed an alternative plan right after the proposal was initially refused in the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal in 2011. They would have got on with the job of providing services through an alternative means on an alternative site. This service could have been up and running years ago if they were sincere about providing parents with the support that they need.

So why this stubborn approach in the face of logical, preferable alternatives? I believe it is to do with funding. The source of the funding is from two different streams: the LINC and the child and family centre. The latter funding provision originally passed the Building the Education Revolution that was initiated by the federal government in 2007. It is my opinion that the child and family centre component of the proposed hub would cost a lot less than the CFC budget would allow. The net effect is that there is spare cash available from that funding stream, and the government and the LINC wish to utilise the money set aside for children and families to promote welfare provision and shift money from the child and family centre budget across to assist in the construction of the remainder of the proposed facility.

As a requirement of the procurement of developments, projected project costings are required to be carried out at key stages through the design process by a cost consultant, broken down into different budgets - a child and family centre, LINC et cetera. Reviewing these separate budgets against the actual funding remaining will shed light on the real cause of the government's position. This information should be freely available to the committee within the project files.

So much money has already been spent on the process to date, not to mention the time, effort and resources that the community has diverted to trying to get a sensible outcome that goes unaccounted for. Where has that money come from? I also think that this is a face-saving exercise to hide and cover up the extent to which the budgets have already been, in a large, expended and not a single child or parent has seen a benefit. This is incompetent at best and it is shameful to then hide behind children and families.

In the absence of any evidence supporting the government's suggestion that an alternative site could not provide equivalent or better outcomes, the committee should, at the very least, insist that alternatives be adequately explored before it reaches any decision. The government clearly has no intention of doing this research before it presses ahead with the proposal.

In my opinion, there remain serious questions in the involvement of the council in their role as planning authority in facilitating this development. It is convenient for the council in that its previous extension to the Memorial Hall shambles be covered up and superseded by the hub proposal. While this dark cloud floats above the governance and operations of the council, I urge the committee to defer its decision of the funding until such a time that the Director of Local Government has made his recommendations to the Minister for Local Government and that said minister has taken the appropriate action.

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That refers to a specific review of the government's operations that was petitioned to the Minister for Local Government.

**Mr BOOTH** - The council's operation or the government's?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - The council's governance and operations that are currently under review by the Director of Local Government.

I am evidently very passionate about this issue. I am a parent of young children that could benefit from the service provision offered by the proposed Child and Family Centre and other services in the hub. My eldest child is in kindergarten at South George Town Primary School and I have a younger child who would clearly benefit from this. I have been disenfranchised. The government and its representatives have not been interested in discussing what parents might like to see if it did not accord with their predetermined outcome. This approach is doomed to fail. It is better that it fails now before more money is wasted on unnecessary buildings rather than later, once a hub is constructed and all that money has been expended.

Let's look to do more with what we have already rather than parachute in a whole new blanket approach for vast sums of money for no net gain. The proposal is not a question of heritage versus parents and children. There are alternatives to provide the same service, cheaper and better, but these alternatives are clear and apparent and yet to be assessed.

Are you really going to make a \$6.8 million investment decision based on the proximity of a supermarket?

**Mr BOOTH** - I was wondering if Richard could bring those panels over to give us a five-minute download of exactly where the centre of town would be or the most efficient location may be?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - We looked this morning at three sites here which I have done a very brief study on, in terms of how they stack up in relation to each other. At the top we have, not in any particular order, the YMCA site, which is the first site we looked at after Regent Square; that's where the judo was. The second one on that list is the Anne Street site, which is the third site we looked at, where there is a concept design for a stand-alone centre. Then at the bottom is the Regent Square site. Those rings on those plans indicate 400 and 800-metre marks respectively. Mr Finch mentioned this morning that we were 1 000 metres from Regent Square at the YMCA site this morning. You could clearly see that from Regent Square, the YMCA site is approximately 400 metres from the existing Memorial Hall. Within the 400 metres of the YMCA site, the entire CBD of George Town is covered.

There are some dot points to highlight some of the things in relation to those locales. For me, it was interesting doing that exercise. I had thought that the Anne Street site was geographically the best located of those sites. After making that assessment, which I don't believe the government has done, I now think that the YMCA site is the best in terms of geographical location. However, if the Anne Street site were to have a stand-alone child and family centre on it, it would be directly opposite the existing community

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health and services provision, which is there in the square, and within 400 metres of the existing LINC building and services within the building we are in at the moment.

The other conclusion I was able to draw from doing this study, is that the Regent Square site is, of these three, the most remote site of any existing child service provisions within the town. It is the one that is furthest away, and has the least amount of residential amenity.

In the absence of any other site to be considered, and in conversation with Mr Nielson who has generously offered to make a donation to government about the Anne Street site, there has been very little conversation or even consideration of that site by the government. The community decided that we would try to fill that void and test that site to see if it would be possible to take a building off the site that we understood from the existing plans that have been provided through the hearings, to take a stand-alone child and family centre.

I do concede that at this stage, this design concept has not had input from either the local enabling group, who have declined to meet or provide any input prior to the hearing, nor does it have the input from the Department of Education.

**Mr BOOTH** - The concept design plan you've shown here, is that potentially to go on any site, or specifically the Anne Street site?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - My personal view as an architect is you can only ever design a building for a specific site, unless you specifically design a building to be for lots of sites. Perhaps that is a strange way of putting it but if the building is a mobile building, then you design it for any site. My personal view is that I would not like to see the concept, as I've designed it here, applied to any other site because a design on another site would have different -

**Mr BOOTH** - But that one is designed for the Anne Street site.

**Mr NICHOLLS** - That is designed specifically for the Anne Street site.

**Mr BOOTH** - As an architect are you saying that that contains all of the necessary ingredients for a CFC?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - As far as I have been able to garner from sitting in on the process that we have been through over the last few years, particularly the TPC hearings - and I have had a great deal of involvement in buildings that were done during the Building the Education Revolution and involvement in the briefs on those projects and examining the drawings and existing designs for Regent Square - I believe this is a fair translation of the requirements that have been provided by the current proposal for the child and family centre component of that proposal on this site. In the design we have even gone beyond that in the sense that we've tried to enclose the part-open spaces within the building infrastructure to maximise the sense of a place within a built form without having to expend money on constructing those. An enclosed open space costs very little to build but it can potentially act as a space on good weather days so, you are effectively getting spaces for free by doing it that way.

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**Mr BOOTH** - In your submission you are indicating that by building on the Anne Street block that particular proposal or similar would save about \$3 million on the proposed expenditure.

**Mr NICHOLLS** - My understanding is that if a stand-alone centre was constructed, and this is a design for a stand-alone centre, the stand-alone centre component of the overall budget is approximately \$2.5 million-\$2.6 million which effectively lets \$3 million off the overall budget to be expended elsewhere. If the existing services in George Town remain in their current locations that clearly frees up the rest of that budgeted money to be spent on services.

**Mr BOOTH** - But your design of the same area would save about \$3 million - that's what you're saying?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - That's right, in fact I would say that a stand-alone child and family centre of a comparable size on any site would save \$3 million.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given that, would you regard proceeding to construct the Regent Square hub as a prudent use of public money?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - Not at all.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you think that to build a hub, given the comments that have been made with regard to location of services and the location of the Regent Square site, would be fit for purpose?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - As defined by the government documents, I believe the proposal that has been designed to put forward would meet the requirements that the government representatives have stated.

**Mr BOOTH** - What about in terms of the community's needs?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - In terms of what the community wants, I don't think the community would be satisfied with that.

**Mr BOOTH** - In regard to the site assessment you have provided in your submission - availability of suitable and preferable alternative sites - can you indicate why the SIPS report recommended the site at Port Dalrymple school?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - More detail given on that was contained on page 15 of the appendix to the report that we looked at this morning. I can read that if you like.

**Mr BOOTH** - No, that is alright, I will look up that documentation. What I was getting at was, given your assessment of those three sites, and I understand there is some other sites available as well, can you give any reason as to why you think the government wanted to proceed with the one on Regent Square when it was not in fact the preferred site?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - I still cannot understand why that corner of Regent Square has been selected by the government as the preferred site. In fact, if one goes back through the history of how that site ultimately got selected, initially a representative of the education

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department met here in council chambers with the general manager and it is reported in the minutes of the council meeting that three sites were offered up for consideration. One was the YMCA site and two of the other sites were both on Regent Square, east and west of the memorial hall. The minutes of the council meeting report that the education department's preference was for the eastern side of the hall, and the recommendation by the general manager to council was that the councillors approved in principle the western side of the memorial hall. At that time the proposed development was just the LINC building but at that meeting councillors gave the general manager and mayor the authority to negotiate the incorporation of a child and family centre with a LINC building. The negotiation then proceeded from there. The site that had been agreed in principle by councillors to take a LINC building ultimately became a site that was a combined hub proposal of a CFC and a LINC.

**Mr BOOTH** - As an architect, do you have an ability to give an opinion with regard to evidence provided to the committee earlier today that to not proceed with the construction of the hub on the main street or in very close proximity would effectively kill off the town?

**Mr NICHOLLS** - I have quite a bit of experience in this matter. My final-year thesis was on this type of remaking the street and in effect directly related to how patterns of urban development and its destruction in post-industrialised cities has an impact on the health and wellbeing of people who reside in those areas. What would be important if there was to be provision of additional services in George Town is that you would want to make sure that that was integrated into the existing urban plan. To propose a building on Regent Square which is contrary to that existing urban structure and fabric will potentially cause more of the same problem that the government is ultimately trying to resolve within the town. I have expanded a bit more on that in my written submission.

**CHAIR** - Thanks to each of you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

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Ms LORRAINE WOOTTON, Mr DESMOND THOMAS WOOTTON AND Ms DEBBIE RAINBOW, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**Mr WOOTTON** - I am representing the George Town District Historical Society whose involvement has been on the heritage side of this proposition. The document I have presented I think is pretty straightforward but there are a couple of points I would like to make before we go for questions.

In paragraph 4, the thing that incensed the Historical Society in the first place was the first document that came out from the proponents when someone who had written it said that there were no heritage values whatsoever of Regent Square. We were quite wild about that and we felt that something should be done, otherwise it was going to seriously devalue the history of the town. We decided to put a submission in to the Tasmanian Heritage Council seeking it to be heritage-listed. That statement, I don't know whether it was incompetence by the person who wrote it or whether it was a deliberate attempt to mislead people or downgrade George Town; anyway, it was made. We put the submission in and finally the council decided to list it, of course with the 25 per cent proviso.

The other thing I'd like to mention, on the next page there is a quote from the Chairman of the Heritage Council, Dr Dianne Snowden, mentioning some of the difficulties they had in determining it. During the last hearing we had, apparently there was a tied vote with the building committee of the Heritage Council, and one officer was given the job to provide a submission to the council, which he did, and when he was questioned in the hearing here there were two questions asking him whether he had read or seen two of the most important documents dealing with George Town and Regent Square. His answer was no to both of them. He hadn't read them, in fact his comment was 'my researchers have let me down'. They were Macquarie's diary and also the notes Macquarie wrote to James Meehan giving him instructions on what to do when he surveyed George Town in 1812.

One of our officers is continuing to communicate with the TPC to try to correct the flaws that were in the document that were put out by the Heritage Council; there are still incorrect statements in them and we are trying to correct that and have it correct on the record. That is proceeding. Thank you.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you for that, Desmond. I have a question with regard to your role in the George Town District Historical Society.

**Mr WOOTTON** - I am the chairman.

**Mr BOOTH** - And is it the view of your society that the construction of this building, were it to proceed on Regent Square, would damage the heritage of George Town?

**Mr WOOTTON** - I think so even though we haven't involved ourselves with that side of it. Another organisation was formed to deal with a lot of that, but, yes, I would say that the majority of people feel that it is going to devalue George Town as a history town. It's something that we have been working towards for the last 12 or 13 years since we have

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been formed to increase the knowledge of the history of George Town, to seek the history of George Town, to research it and we do that via running the little watch house over here, we have a model village, we also do historic walks, talks to the schoolchildren, walks around the town with them and we do feel that it's going to ruin George Town. Regent Square is George Town. It's the centre of George Town historically - the most important icon.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given in your submission you have indicated that there are plenty of other sites available, or words to that effect, would you regard the construction on this site as a prudent use of public money?

**Mr WOOTTON** - There are plenty of other sites, more suitable sites, without going into that because other people have gone into that.

**Mr BOOTH** - Therefore, if this was constructed on the site and it proceeded, would you regard that as a prudent use of public money?

**Mr WOOTTON** - No, I wouldn't say that at all.

**Ms WOOTTON** - The cultural heritage of the square is known to people who have lived here - at least six generations of my family have lived here. I have lived here at four different periods of my life. People who have lived here for a long time have always believed that the square was not to be built on. It's just a cultural knowledge that people had. When I was first told about this by Sennin Charles very early in the proceedings, in fact, it wasn't long after the hall had been finished in 2008, probably the end of that year or at least early in 2009, I had a phone call from Dr Charles telling me that there was a big building to be built in George Town to incorporate health and education, and that it must be on Regent Square. After he told me about what it was I assumed that it was going to be near Port Dalrymple School. I said, 'Is that right?' and he said, 'No, it's to be down the street, it must be on that square.' I said, 'Oh well, you can't do that, you can't build on the square. It's a historic place.'

Most people have had that knowledge that it was for the people of the town. People have different ideas about how it came to be there, but they believe that it belonged to the people as an open space. It's been a recreation ground at some time and then the football was moved off it. Then after that happened there were moves to make it into a proper parkland. If you see the George Town Council's presentation folder that they used from - the photos were taken in the early nineties - and it was used right up until the mid-2000s - you can see that they have used a picture of the town - I can give it to you - you can see the square is the focal part of it. You can see that there were moves to make it into a proper parkland after the football ground was moved off it and the cricket was moved off it.

You can see that the garden beds have been put in there - the protea garden that Dr Jane talked about and the grevillea garden that the Lions put in. They are all nicely cut around the edges and it is just a shame that in the last few years that has been neglected.

You will also see there that the parking was available around the back of the hall as well as at the sides and during the TPC hearing we were told that there was a condition put on the extensions to the hall that there must be another 120 car parks and half of them were

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supposed to go on the site that the hub is now proposed to be built on. What came out of that condition and the Planning Commission hearing was this particular map that shows there was a plan drawn up with 120 car parks but you can see that those carparks are existing there now so it wasn't any extra and it probably wasn't done for that particular purpose. I think it was done for line marking.

This cultural knowledge of the town that the square was never to be built on was discussed at the public forum. The first most people heard about the building was on 2 August 2010, after some of the decisions had been made and the amendment had already been allowed and voted for by the council and representations had closed. Nearly 100 people turned up at that forum to hear about this for the first time and to see the plans that had already been drawn up - in fact, tenders had already been called for and then withdrawn - and it was obvious from the people at that meeting that they did not approve of building any building on the square. There were government people there from the LINC, the CFC, the education department and the council, and if those people had heeded the obvious feelings of the community at that meeting we could have had a CFC built here by now.

There is a cost to the community from RMPAT and Planning Commission hearings and the heritage opportunities lost if we lose our public park and necessary parking, especially when the economy improves. We won't have the parking we need if this building is put there. The loss of money the council now receives from the lease of the library and Service Tasmania will leave empty council facilities.

People here are sick of writing submissions and signing petitions, just to be ignored. Politicians and bureaucrats have divided this town and they have purposely kept the groups apart so there has been no consultation between the two groups. Council staff, teachers and librarians, et cetera, have been in fear of losing their employment if they signed a petition or comment, and most of these decisions have been made by bureaucrats, politicians and professionals who don't live here and haven't properly consulted with the full community.

Locals have been ignored, but they know the town and how it works. They know how busy the traffic is, they know what will work and what won't, and probably know the best place for a CFC or a LINC, but most of the people haven't been included in any of the consultation that has happened. The initial survey that was done to determine where this building should go was answered by 77 people, two of whom said Regent Square. Quite a lot of them said central or close to the town, but central could mean between the three schools. As you have heard, we have three schools and this was probably the reason the decision to put it near Port Dalrymple School was rejected, because we have two other schools that say they wouldn't go to it if it was put near Port Dalrymple.

Apart from a small group of younger people who have been told if it doesn't go on Regent Square it will go to Sorell, hardly anyone has had a say in this. There are 77 in the initial survey. The other survey of the parents and friends of the CFC that was taken in August last year, of the 22 votes that you talked about, if you look closely you will find that there were only 11 or 12 people there and they each had two votes, so that is who made that decision and that is included in the notes.



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It has been led by professionals. The committee that was set up was led by professionals and many of them don't live here. The SIPS recommendation was ignored and it recommended that it be built near the Port Dalrymple School, not at the school, and we have heard lots of times that there is a stigma about Port Dalrymple School.

I have read the submissions to the Public Works Committee on the Bridgewater Foundation of Education project and the \$45 million that was spent there, and the aim of that was to make it so good that everyone would want to go there because apparently now most of the feeder schools aren't going to Bridgewater High School. The aim was making really good facilities. If there is a stigma about Port Dalrymple School, why can't we have this wonderful facility built near that school so that everyone will want to go to it? It shouldn't really matter in a small town like this where it is put. If the facility and the services are there, I am sure people will find their way to it. If it were put there, it is closer to the people probably most in need of it.

With the LINC and Service Tasmania, there seems to have been no input at all, apart from Dr Charles. He terms himself a reclusive Buddhist monk, he lives at Pipers River and doesn't particularly mix with the community. He doesn't have any regard for the heritage and is quite proud about the fact that he doesn't have any regard for history. I think his history of town squares was a little bit off this morning. He first stipulated that it must be on the square. I can understand his reasoning for that but I don't think he has the community feeling for the square most of us have.

We have had all sorts of skulduggery through this process. First of all, the whole idea was purposely kept from the public until after the amendment had been approved. Councillors were told that they had to fix the mistake of the extensions to the hall, having been built over the lease that stipulated public buildings in the centre. This is subject to two crown leases, the whole of the square and a rectangle in the centre that was put around the hall that stipulated that was to be for public buildings. The large stadium in 2007 was built outside that lease and councillors were told that they needed to amend the planning scheme to make it the two-thirds across the front of the Macquarie Street frontage that was to be amended to allow a civic building.

We also had trouble with our representations on the amendments both times and our submissions to the heritage works were all copied appallingly in the minutes. This is an example and that is one of many pages. You will need your glasses, Mr Brooks.

**Mr BROOKS** - I have them here. I still can't see.

**Ms WOOTTON** - Even if you had them close up. But this is the way our submissions were printed in the agenda and the way that were sent off to the TCP and to the Heritage Council as well. Just appalling. No colour; the diagrams can't be seen. I am happy for you to have a look at that. Some of these submissions to the Heritage Council were not forwarded to the Council we found later and it seemed strange that the second time that the amendment and development application, the combined S43A was submitted on the day that - or was dealt with by the council on the day that the Heritage Council was to access Regent Square for heritage listing.

It appeared that that may have been a way of stopping the heritage assessment because before we had been told that there could be no heritage assessment while there was a

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development application. This development application had been received on the Friday before the Wednesday council meeting with the George Town Council and the Heritage Council met on that same day. Fortunately the Heritage Council went ahead and they did provisionally list Regent Square on the heritage register that day.

Before that we had no opportunity to argue anything about heritage because the square wasn't heritage-listed, although the 1956 Memorial Hall was listed and that had to be taken into account. I would just like to say something about evidence that we heard today from Mr Finch about hubs. He told us that most of these buildings that our hub is based on the Huon LINC. The Huon LINC is a Huon LINC; it is not a hub and doesn't have any child and family centre attached to it. In fact, there are only two hubs that have been built in the state and I believe that the Queenstown hub was the first one that was built and that was built because there was already a council chambers and a library built close together and a school of mines, some sort of educational facility, and so the whole thing was built around those existing facilities.

We were told in the TPC hearing by Mrs Larcombe that already the post-grade 10 provisions were moved out of the hub back to the school. We have heard it from several people that the CFC isn't functioning as well as they would like because it is not catching the people that are just passing by because it is not near a school. The other hub is at Bridgewater, which was built a little bit after that, and I believe that the CFC component of that is an Aboriginal CFC and that there are three spokes to the hub in different schools, East Derwent, Gagebrook and the other school in that area that you would probably know better than I do.

I have been and had a look at these, from the outside I must admit, but we only have two hubs. Since then there have been six or seven or eight new child and family centres opened and they are all standalone CFCs and they are nearly all built next to either a school or a neighbourhood house or both and most of them have - well, quite a few of them have childcare facilities as well and that is something that is not included in this one but maybe down the track it would probably be advisable to have - if it is found advisable to have childcare facilities - full-time childcare facilities included in this child and family centre then the provision of the Heritage Council that says that there should be no more than 25 per cent of the square taken up with buildings and

The provision of the Heritage Council that says there should be no more than 25 per cent of the square taken up with buildings and roads and car parking, then that would preclude any extra. Also the George Town hub is actually one and a half times bigger than the Bridgewater hub. That is in the planning documents. Why does George Town need one one and a half times bigger? The six per cent - I think you will find that six per cent is the building of the percentage of the square, it doesn't include the playground, which is a large area and it will take off that much of the square from the public space. That's all, thank you.

**Mr BROOKS** - Firstly, thank you for handing up that booklet. The thing that I look at when I saw that - and again I'm probably a little bit disappointed that I've got to say this, but I will - beautiful picture that has already been ruined. You've already got a whopping great building in there anyway, so why -

**Ms WOOTTON** - Two wrongs don't make a right.

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**Mr BROOKS** - The question is, will it actually make an improvement? If I may be frank, Chair, that crooked-looking building with the windows that aren't straight looks bloody ridiculous.

**Ms WOOTTON** - We agree with you, we're not arguing.

**CHAIR** - Are you giving evidence?

**Mr BROOKS** - No, no, no. There's a question here. That picture has already changed, it's already there. So you don't believe this addition would enhance it actually, make it look better?

**Ms WOOTTON** - No. I think the building that has been added onto it, the extension, is actually a stand-alone building. It's not going to be made to look any better by building another large building beside it. The main thing is that it will block off the parkland from the main street. There are two restaurants in that part of the street. One is closed at the moment, but it was a very long-running restaurant, Mario's on the corner, and quite historic itself. But there was provision for two restaurants there, and at the moment you can sit in them and look across - the car park is there, I'd prefer it wasn't there - but you can see across the cars to the parkland behind, and you can see that there's a park that you can go and walk in, and hopefully there will be some more seating there one day. Whereas if you've got a building you won't be able to see across that building. I've looked at that and you won't be able to see that there's even a tree behind it because of the height of the building, I think it's 6.8 from the measurements.

**Mr BROOKS** - Yes, I raised the height of the building this morning earlier. I wanted to briefly mention Queenstown, and that moves onto - and given the time constraints I'll be brief, Chair - your last point. I rang a friend of mine, who is a lovely person, single mum, unemployed, has two kids, lives in Queenstown, lived in Queenstown all her life, just to ask her what she thought about the hub in Queenstown. I was surprised that she was really positive about it and what she had done for it. So that certainly, for me, was a little - and I thought it was in a different location that what it was, so she reinforced where it was, and it was closer to the CBD and she liked it there. I did do a little bit of research about the other ones. In your final paragraph you've said, 'The development has been opposed by the majority of the George Town community for the last four years.' I arrived here early this morning and had a wander round. I spoke to three people, just random, and none of them were opposed to it. I don't know whether that's pure luck, it was fortunate people that I walked into or not. Can you explain how you've come to the determination that the majority of the community are opposed to this? I've seen the petitions. Were there any surveys done or anything like that, that engaged that, rather than petitions. Obviously petitions, if you look at the numbers, I think there was 1100 on one and 400 on the other. There have been three petitions done over time.

**Ms WOOTTON** - Yes, one of the petitions we had to do was to get a public meeting. We had over 400 signatures to get that. It was left to the last minute. We had a meeting the week before Christmas. We were concerned that people mightn't come. The hall was packed, there were nearly 200 people there. You've probably seen the motions that were passed at that. I don't know what else we could do. Then we had another petition, we'd already had two petitions going around concerning this to the House of Assembly.

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Then, we had a petition to the Legislative Council, there were nearly 1800 signatures on that.

It's not easy getting signatures, we stood down the street. That one was only done over less than a month. People have busy lives, but we managed to get those signatures thinking that it might show people that there was a concern here. Not all of that one were from George Town, but this is something that is important to not just George Town; because of the heritage of the square it's of national significance and particularly state significance. We have supporters all over the state that just can't believe what's happening to our heritage.

Last Saturday we had a rally. It was a beautiful day and there were at least 200 people at the rally. Some of those people are here today. There were over 170 signatures on the petition that was taken there. Not everyone signed it but we got as many as we could as proof of how many people were there. The feeling was that we don't want any building. It's nothing against the building itself, everyone's supportive of a child and family centre in particular, but not on Regent Square.

I've been working out of the watch house and the pilot station in this community at least since 2004 when that was opened, and pushing tourism and heritage. We promote the town as the Macquarie town. We have a model of the town that was planned by Macquarie to show people. It's a large model that Debbie and Des constructed. It shows people what the importance of the town is. People from New South Wales come here and they understand. They're fighting for their square, which is Australia's oldest square. This is Tasmania's oldest public square. We've been fighting for that, to keep it as it is.

If there were nowhere else to put these facilities, then I'm sure we would concede something. But it's not as if there's nowhere else that this can be built. I think you should reject it.

**Mr HALL** - You talked about the public meeting held on 14 December 2012. There were six motions put through. I'm a little unclear here, because you've got six councillors supporting those motions, and three against? That's the way I've read it -

**Ms WOOTTON** - That was when it came to the council -

**Mr HALL** - I'm trying to work out -

**Ms WOOTTON** - That wasn't at the meeting, it was at a council meeting, when they had to decide whether to approve the second time this came through. We've been through this all once, it was tossed out. We had an appeal. We appealed against the first decision to allow the building on the site because it had been zoned to allow a civic building. This was in 2010-11. Friends of Regent Square was set up to raise money to finance an appeal, which we did because the TPC had already advised the council that the building they were looking at, which is essentially what it is now, was not a civic building because of the education and the health facilities that were in it. They came to the conclusion that it was more an education and a health facility than that it was a civic building and therefore it was not allowed on the recreation-zoned area of the square.

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We won that appeal and, under normal circumstances, you are not allowed to apply for the same development on the same site for two years but this one came up through this 43A application where you have an amendment and a development application coming through at the same time. It was argued in the TPC whether 'may not' meant you could or you couldn't but we were up against the DPP on that.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, I'm with you now.

**Ms WOOTTON** - So that was probably the council.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you, Lorraine, and your submission speaks for itself pretty well. We don't have a lot of time to go through many questions but I'd just like to draw your attention to a statement you made with regard to commenting on the George Town Hospital and Community Centre assessment previously by the 2006 Public Works Committee. You state:

If the George Town hub and George Town Hospital and Community Centre is fulfilling the promises below then it is already doing what the proponents of the hub propose to do. The fears are that the hub will be duplicating at least part of the role of the this multi-purpose health facility and it will result in services moving from the George Town Hospital and Community Centre to the hub. Many residents express concern about the waste of money in duplicating what we already have. These excerpts below show what the hospital is to provide.

Effectively what you are saying there is that already that will cause a problem with an approved development only a few years ago, justified on the basis of it being effectively a hub for these services.

**Ms WOOTTON** - Yes. All that money was spent on that facility as a multi-purpose one-stop shop for health facilities and I can see that there are some other features in the child and family centre that aren't included in the hospital. I think that was looked at and questioned by Sue Napier in the Public Works Committee but it was felt that those children's activities were catered for in the schools and other places in the community, so we have a multi-purpose health centre and community centre there already.

We also had in 2007 part of the extensions to the hall. The library was completely refurbished. The community actually wanted that library to be made bigger but there was no state government funding to allow that and so it was cut off short. It was supposed to have had another extension out to the western side of it which would have probably made it plenty big enough for the extra LINC facilities now but that was vetoed by the library representative that was in the workshop that we had before that building.

**Mr BOOTH** - Getting back to the Public Works Committee hearing report, and I am quoting out of it here and from your submission but you have quoted from that report, I understand, the Public Works Committee 2006 Report on the George Town Hospital and Community Health Centre, which states:

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The George Town Community Health and Welfare Committee support the redevelopment of the hospital site to co-locate appropriate health and welfare services. Therefore, the future role of the site is envisaged to be as a multi-function facility, new primary health-care services including a domestic violence worker, young parents' support and family counselling, a youth health worker, kinder gym, exercise classes for the aged and a range of other health education programs. These services address the need for community services reflecting in part the area's demographics.

Have those facilities proceeded in the hospital there?

**Ms WOOTTON** - Yes, they have. Every time you go through the door there is board that says what facilities are onsite today and there is usually half a dozen or sometimes more - physiotherapy, speech therapists, podiatry, all sorts of things - and I think everyone is very happy with the hospital. It is also says it is close proximity to the main business centre and other facilities in the town.

**Mr BOOTH** - It is directly opposite the Anne Street block that has been offered for free to the government.

**Ms WOOTTON** - Yes, not very far away, and the doctors' surgeries, another great facility in the town, are close to that and that is almost opposite the Anne Street site.

**Mr BOOTH** - The report goes on to say the great thing about the building is its location, which is very central to the town precinct, medical practice, ambulance and university accommodation house. The report's writer says, 'It is an excellent location and one which I would love to be able to duplicate in other places'. Has there been any consideration given to just adding the bits of the CFC that are missing from there at the moment to that hospital?

**Ms WOOTTON** - Not that I am aware of but there is a large area behind it that possibly could be used a site; in fact, part of it is the old female factory site that has been heritage listed as well and there is a whole block of vacant land for sale at the moment not very far away from the hospital.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given your concerns about the duplication of services, would you regard this as prudent use of public money?

**Ms WOOTTON** - No, I wouldn't. I believe the hub idea has been to put government services all under one roof, whether it is a LINC or a proper hub, to put them in a government building rather than council-owned buildings. In the past, councils and communities have had to provide facilities for things like libraries, courtrooms, Service Tasmania and that sort of thing, so communities have provided those facilities for government services and been paid lease money. Now the idea is to take those out of that so it is in government money and what happens to these vacant facilities when they are moved of the hall and council chambers? Service Tasmania is aware of this building. There is a large area bigger than this just next door that has not been used since 2002 which was the courtroom that we no longer need here. That building has not been used for council purposes since 2002 and this is going to mean more empty council buildings. It is going to take a long time for the government to recoup nearly \$7 million

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in the saving from leasing government council buildings, and communities are going to suffer because of this.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you think that the co-location of the additional services would be more appropriate with the services offered by the hospital currently rather than with the LINC?

**Ms WOOTTON** - Yes, I think the two would go better together and it is not very far to here as well for Service Tasmania.

**Mr BOOTH** - Therefore, if it were to proceed as proposed with those potential conflicts between the library, access centre and the child and family centre, do you think that that would be fit for purpose? We have to determine as a committee whether the project is fit for purpose and whether it is prudent use of public money . You have said that it is not prudent use of public money and evidence to the committee from various people has been that there may be a potential conflict between an access centre, a library and a child and family centre and we have heard about the other hubs being developed where there have been problems. You have said that you felt they were more compatible with the services already provided at the hospital. If that was not developed at the hospital but was developed with those facilities, would you regard that as fit for purpose? You've said it's not prudent expenditure of money, but is it fit for purpose then to develop it anyway?

**Ms WOOTTON** - To develop the hub?

**Mr BOOTH** - Yes.

**Ms WOOTTON** - Not as it is. I don't think it's prudent use of money at all and I don't think that it's suitable to be built altogether in that area. Older people like to be able to go to the library and have a little bit of peace and quiet. It's great to have children involved in the library as well but I don't really think that that's going to fit into our town properly under the one roof.

**Ms RAINBOW** - I've spent nearly 30 days trying to view the TPC current plans that were available and the decision and was refused point-blank a copy of the decision to produce today. I have concerns with the percentage of the site and size that has been mentioned today. We left the hearing on the ninth day, and during that time I think the amount of land that was given for the usage of this development changed two to three times. One of them was 100 metres by 158 metres, as given there, which was a considerably large amount of the square.

When the decision came back that line had disappeared. I find it very difficult how someone can get a size of something without a given area to put it on. It has been explained by someone representing the council that because that line has disappeared, we've returned to the original siting of the hall and the new build here. The new hall was there, the monstrosity was between the two and the new build, and that's around nine squares. I can't see how nine squares goes into that amount of land and only comes up with less than 20 per cent.

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Today reference was made to the two previous builds. I must say that one was made before I was born so I didn't have much control over it. The second had my approval completely because it was said through the community it was going to be a redevelopment of the memorial hall, a flash new cultural centre that would include toilets, kitchen, supper room, et cetera. I was wholly behind that because it had not come out of the 1950s inside. It was advertised in January 2007 as a redevelopment and there was no mention in the advertisement in the paper for submissions against it that there would be a new build attached to it. The only way I would have known this is if I had attended council meetings.

Through the appeal there were mentions of this building as a monstrosity. One of the reasons given approval by the Heritage Commission was that that building was there. We weren't allowed to address the history of that building being present so we feel that has slipped under the radar. The council sought state government funding for it and the state government didn't see fit to give it a grant so it actually came from federal funding, for which we're still paying.

It is under utilised. There have been problems with the usage of it. I was there on Monday last week when we had a storm and the noise in there was so loud you couldn't hear someone talking three feet from you. The clanking of metal was a bit like the *Titanic* scene when they were going down.

Much was said during the appeal of what monetary gain was going to be made by businesses in the town. Then again, we're told that this town is in dire straits. We know that; we know how many businesses were here. I think it is reflected in a lot of small communities and small towns in Tasmania. I for one have gone from business to business in the town and asked them if they feel they are going to get more business from the hub and the answer is definitely no. Although we have had people say they have done a survey, it has not been taken. There has been no feasibility study. We have not seen the numbers intending to use it and I feel the other users in this town, the other 30 per cent of the people in this town over 45 years, have been ignored.

Today we have also heard about child care. During several different hearings we heard a representative of the CFC refer to it as adjunct child care. It is does not matter if it is partial or only two minutes a day, there is still mention of that.

I have been a member of the library for 40 years and was never asked if I am comfortable being in a building where there is going to be play with children. I love that, but we must consider concentration levels and privacy levels. It is open to the foyer when you go in and there are public toilets across from it. I have used the reference library in Launceston for over 30 years and that has gone to bits since this LINC concept. There have been children abusing the system there; I have had abuse from the children. Elderly people have told me they refuse to go in there because of the gangs of children playing video games.

We represent, as I said before, 30 per cent of the population and from speaking to the librarian of the online centre, they get between 2 000 people and 3 000 people a month and most of them are elderly. We have not been asked our opinion.



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Much has been made of Mr Eaton's parking assessment. This was done over a half-day period. There is no mention that some parking along the main street is limited between 15 and 30 minutes and I would like to see anybody who can get their hair done in this town in 15 minutes. Mr Eaton had to come back today to actually re-present part of his submission, and he admitted that he had made errors in his judgment. There was reference in that to the number of cars that pass along Macquarie Street. That could have it upgraded as a major road because it is the main access. You come around the roundabout and up the main street which nearly all the traffic in the town does to reach different points.

As for the siting of CFC, I have gone around to various sites in Tasmania and all this centrality - the big need to be in the middle - has not seemed a problem with other towns. We have CFC after CFC; they are in school grounds, off major arterial roads and sometimes in backwaters. So why was it a need here to have them central and not there?

Safety issues pertaining this operation of a CFC within the hub have not been addressed. The minister when spoken to said that child safety had not been a consideration.

**Mr BOOTH** - Which minister was that?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Michelle O'Byrne. During the appeal I had asked repeatedly for a DIER report. Was there a DIER report made? I never saw it. Mr Eaton on the ninth day says there was a DIER report. I think this is flagrant. We are told now we are supposed to care about children. Where is the minister caring? I worked for nearly 39 years within emergency services in this town. I think I am aware of what the social issues are but I've also seen what children look like when they've been hit by cars. If you look at the plans for that building, most of these other CFCs have got a fence around them. You go to any childcare centre in Tasmania; they're childproof to me. I have trouble getting through the gates. This will be entered through sliding doors, then through another set of sliding doors till you're inside the facility. They have to pass the library, and pass Service Tas. We've had violent scenes in Service Tas. I've sat there and seen Centacare where they've broken phones out of sheer frustration. Do we want to expose our children to that? As a volunteer, I know that background checks have to be done and maintained to be around children.

**CHAIR** - I draw your attention to the fact that there is a street entry provided on the plans off Elizabeth Street, so there is not the compulsion to come through the Service Tas area.

**Ms RAINBOW** - Yes I've asked about that, and it was never really clearly defined what that use was. So without knowing what the actual use was, I've excluded that because to me, a supermarket might have two entrances, but if there's a bolt one there, I'd use it.

Recently, while I was going into the library, the book delivery man came in. He did a U-turn, and if I hadn't foreseen it, I would have been a bonnet ornament. So how are children expected to react to this? The front of that building empties into a public car park. Its usage is not going to be restricted. I'll go back to volunteers having to do security checks. It's been said here that the parents attending do not have to have background checks to be around other people's children. I have a big problem, because I have seen the violence that has been administered to children by these so-called carers.

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Thank you for your time. Believe you me, I think it's an absolute waste of money. Duplication of services are not warranted.

**CHAIR** - Thanks very much Debbie.

**Mr BOOTH** - Debbie, I think you've pretty well covered everything and I've asked the same questions to various people. You obviously don't think it's a prudent use of public funds?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Definitely not.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given the design of it, and what you've said about the issues of incompatibility, do you think it would be fit-for-purpose if it was proceeded with?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Not in the one building, no.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you.

**Mr BROOKS** - Certainly you made some worthy comments. One of the first ones you made was about the use of the 'monstrosity' - that weirdo looking building. How often is that building used?

**Ms RAINBOW** - I go to exercise classes for two hours a week. As far as I know, in all the time it's been open, I've never seen an actual basketball game being held. I've queried the building's design because it's got such low windows, that to have aggressive or vigorous sport -

**Mr BROOKS** - I know it isn't within the scope of this project to look at the use of that building.

**Ms RAINBOW** - There are hours available. I did offer the total usage of the complex in my report. I have to go through lots of papers to find it, but usage is put in the council agendas each month. I could make it available to you.

**Mr BROOKS** - So what do they use it for, mainly?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Market day on Saturday, once a month. Didn't you want to think of any other uses; it's just that I'm desperate here -

**CHAIR** - We're a bit constrained here.

**Ms RAINBOW** - I know, off the top of my head, all I know is what I use. That's market once a month, two hours -

**Mr BROOKS** - So they use for the basketball comps or whatever?

**Ms RAINBOW** - No.

**Mr BROOKS** - Do they use that up at the school?

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**Ms RAINBOW** - They do use it for practice.

**Mr BROOKS** - Again it comes to demand for this project and whether or not that facility could be used more without having to build another one. I don't think it's for this committee to determine that, but I'm just more interested -

**Ms RAINBOW** - That's our biggest worry. We already have a white elephant. We are worried that in the future this building will be underutilised. Service Tas has been reduced in hours. We have seen reduction in services already and so far it has been an experiment. We have one more of them in Tasmania. If it fits Queenstown, does that mean it fits here? You mention that you spoke to one person but all the other users have not been spoken to in this town.

**Mr BROOKS** - That was in Queenstown.

**Mr BOOTH** - You mentioned that you were denied access to some documents or plans.

**Ms RAINBOW** - There was a statement made at a council meeting. I asked the mayor if parking would be considered on the eastern side of the Memorial Hall and I was told that dotted line has gone, which was that area of delineation on the plans of that last day of the TPC decision. I went back on four occasions and was told the planner wasn't there for various reasons. By fluke yesterday I had my last-ditch approach. We received the decision back from the TPC and it told us what they wanted, but we didn't actually have the total wording of the amendment and permit and that's what I wanted to see. I went in yesterday and was told there was no way I was going to get it without permission of the general manager.

**Mr BOOTH** - So you still haven't seen it?

**Ms RAINBOW** - I saw it on the counter but wasn't allowed to have a copy of it. The plans were made available then and that is where these percentages down the side don't seem to tally with what I have heard today. I have great problems with that.

**Mr BOOTH** - Going back to what Mr Brooks asked in regard to the building you describe as a white elephant, were there to be something constructed on Regent Square, in your view could that be retrofitted for whatever is needed such as the CFC, for example?

**Ms RAINBOW** - It would be wonderful to see a utility in this town used. I can understand rationalisation but we have many buildings like the old YMCA judo centre up for sale. It would be lovely to see utilisation of buildings and if possible I would love to see it.

**Mr BOOTH** - What about an old commercial building like the one opposite, for example, the old Chickenfeed store?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Yes, if it could be used again I would love to see it.

**Mr BOOTH** - You are representing the progress association; is that correct?

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**Ms RAINBOW** - No, I'm president of the Georgetown Ratepayers Association. I was a volunteer in this town for nearly 30 years. I have lived here for 37 years and been a ratepayer for 35 years.

**Mr BOOTH** - In your view as the president of that association it would be a better proposition to utilise current infrastructure, wherever it might be in town, rather than building another one?

**Ms RAINBOW** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thanks very much.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

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**Mr PETER COX, Mr GERALD O'DOHERTY, Mr GRAEME NEILSON AND Ms HELEN FLANAGAN** WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**Mr COX** - There is one matter in the submission this morning from the Department of Education that concerns me and I think is inaccurate. It states - if my maths are correct, and they're not brilliant - that the area of the square is 6.2 hectares, whereas in fact the surveyed area of the square is 5.85 hectares at the last time it was surveyed. It was something that took the best part of a day to determine in the hearing before the Planning Commission and I think the correct version needs to be as part of the evidence.

I've been in this town for the past 35 years. My wife was at one stage the adult literacy officer for this town and held that position for 10 years. I was vice-principal of George Town High School for a number of years and was later principal of that school. Since then I've been involved very deeply in the history of the town and in heritage tourism. At the moment I'm chairman of the group that runs the Low Head Pilot Station Museum, and am secretary of the George Town District Historical Society.

The points I want to make that are different from what has been said before are about the nature of Regent Square being central to George Town. It is nowhere near the geographical centre of George Town. The CBD of George Town is on what is virtually a peninsula created by York Cove and increased by the York Rivulet that effectively divides the town into two separate parts. In fact it is a 500-metre walk from the roundabout at the head of Macquarie Street, down almost to the end of the shopping centre, before you get to the location of the child and family centre, and a large number of the shops most frequently visited are located at that top end of the square. The only other centre which is greatly visited down near the memorial hall site is the Woolworths supermarket. There is another supermarket in the northern side to the suburbs, an IGA store, which means that not all people in George Town need to come down into that part of the town at all.

The problem goes further as far as residents of this town who walk is concerned, because surrounding the CBD is a collar of non-residential land consisting of parking areas, churches, the fire brigade, the YMCA, the Star of the Sea school, the Returned Service Leagues Club, and then Manduama Park, which means that before you get to the southeastern residential areas of the town you've already walked some 1.2 kilometres from the site proposed for the hub.

A very large proportion of the town on the northern side lies well over a kilometre away from the town and Regent Square and the three schools all lie more than a kilometre away from there, so to place this proposal in the centre of the town is not placing it on Regent Square. In fact, the worst comes as far as the child and family centre is concerned. This is something which is supposed to be dealing with young children and young adults. The main aim of it is to improve the educational outcomes of these children, and the idea is that there be a very close link between the families, where they live and their neighbouring school.

This would be an impossible situation given the proposed location for the CFC. The actual philosophy behind the CFC is that it be located in residential areas, close enough

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to its users so they can easily walk to the town. I have given figures in my representation from the SIPS report. They are taken from the SIPS analysis of five, or maybe six, specific locations in George Town in relation to their distance from residential areas of the town, distance from the Housing Commission houses in the town. Out of all the possible locations to place a child and family centre, Regent Square has the least percentage of residential areas within easy walking distance and the greatest number of Housing Commission homes an unreasonable walking distance away from it. The only residential area in the town that is close to Regent Square is an area of older-aged people with a very, very small percentage of children living in that particular area.

The second point I want to make is concerning the matter of the LINC and the services arranged there. One of the aims, I understand, of the LINC as far as literacy is also the idea of getting young people to return to schooling, to go ahead and do post-secondary courses. The other two hubs at Queenstown and at Bridgewater, were designed to be close to such facilities; this one is not. The place where the grade 11 and 12 complex is located is at the Port Dalrymple School. The skill training centres in the town are, again, a kilometre away from the present library.

Whereas I see, especially at the Huon LINC which I have visited and also at the Bridgewater hub which I have also visited, the ease with which there is some sort of liaison between what's going on in the LINC and those students who are above secondary school age and continue with their education, that link will not occur as far as George Town is concerned. If you were to locate the LINC closer to the secondary training areas you would take it out of the centre of the town but I'm not absolutely certain that's a good idea given the other users apart from the post-secondary education students who are using it.

I see this concept here as very much flawed and very much unplanned. I personally think that it is an example of what has been a fairly unplanned way in which the education facilities in this town have been developed in recent years - very ad hoc indeed.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you for that. Your submission is very compelling, I must say, and given the veracity of your evidence, have you any comment on how it could possibly come to pass that we are here today discussing a proposal in such an inappropriate location, according to the witnesses?

**Mr COX** - I think the most appropriate location of the lot, all other things being equal, would be on the south-eastern corner of the school grounds at the Port Dalrymple School. I see some real problems with it, especially in relation to the relocation of the LINC. Maybe the LINC would be better in the centre of George Town, especially because of the relationship with the digital hub which is our online access centre, which is thriving in the centre it's found in at the moment. But the placement of a stand-alone child and family centre on that corner would be reasonably close to some of the other facilities available for helping the disadvantaged people in town such as Wattle and Neighbourhood House. It would be fairly close to the houses which are in the far northern and north-western parts of the town, furthest away from the CBD, and yet it is no further away for the people who live in South George Town. That corner is in fact 200 metres closer to the service station which most people from South George Town pass on their way to town than is Regent Square.

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**Mr BOOTH** - Can you understand any reason why we are assessing an application in an inappropriate spot, according to most of the submitters?

**Mr COX** - Yes, I do. It's a compromise, based on the fact, I believe, that the people of South George Town did not want the child and family centre located near Port Dalrymple School and I think that's what the compromise is.

**Mr BOOTH** - If it were to proceed where it's proposed, would you regard that as a prudent use of public money?

**Mr COX** - No, because I don't think it's going to work as efficiently as it would if it were located somewhere closer to a much, much higher percentage of the residential areas of town. It would not attract those people who do not have cars to the same extent it would if it were closer to the residential areas.

**Mr BOOTH** - So therefore it would not be fit for purpose?

**Mr COX** - I don't think it is, no.

**Mr BROOKS** - Based on what you have said, is there a significant number of people that don't have a vehicle in the area?

**Mr COX** - Yes, I think there is.

**Mr BROOKS** - You wouldn't know the percentage or have a rough idea?

**Mr COX** - I would have no idea what the percentage is.

**Mr BROOKS** - Okay.

**Mr COX** - I do know that from both South George Town and the northern suburbs there are a lot of people that actually walk into the CBD and out of it.

**Mr BROOKS** - The evidence that we have received today is that it should be in the CBD given that's where most people will need to attend at some point to access the services there. Wouldn't it make more sense to put it where most people are going to be rather than putting it into an outlying area?

**Mr COX** - First, I challenge your assumption. I'm not quite sure the extent to which people will need to use the Tasmania shop -

**Mr BROOKS** - The Service Tasmania shop.

**Mr COX** - Service Tasmania shop, especially as I know that up at the Neighbourhood House there are facilities whereby they can get assistance there for the filling in of forms. I don't know what goes on with the social services network well enough to give expert advice on that. As far as shopping is concerned, it is not necessary for a large number of people in the northern suburbs to go down that area of town simply because the IGA store has a fairly good supply of basic groceries and is fairly well patronised. The other thing is that for other absolute essentials like medical and pharmaceuticals, and even

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getting takeaways, you don't have to go that far down Macquarie Street. Those facilities I'm talking about are in fact at least one block further up from the edge of Regent Square, let alone further down on the other side of the Memorial Hall.

**Mr BROOKS** - But they are not centrally located.

**Mr COX** - What are not centrally located?

**Mr BROOKS** - Those other facilities. If you were to, say, go to the IGA, the takeaway and -

**Mr COX** - To go to the IGA you are a kilometre out of town on the northern side, maybe 800 metres. To go to the chemist's shop, you would be in Macquarie Street, but you still have a 400 to 500-metre walk from there down to the proposed location for the child and family centre and similarly with two of the most popular takeaway shops and sandwich bars.

**Mr BROOKS** - They are in Macquarie Street -

**Mr COX** - They are in Macquarie Street, but up at the eastern end, not down at the end where the child and family centre is supposed to be located.

**Mr BROOKS** - Where you said you think it should be was near the Port Dalrymple School. That is around 1.7 kilometres from here, is that correct, according to the testimony earlier?

**Mr COX** - No, it was the neighbourhood house on the other side. That corner is, I will take a guess and say is about 800 metres away from here. To get to the school you are over a kilometre away; I would say 800 metres or 900 metres to that particular corner.

**CHAIR** - Peter, when you were discussing matters in answering Kim's questions regarding the south-east corner of the Port Dalrymple school site.

**Mr COX** - South-west, I beg your pardon.

**CHAIR** - South-west. Am I right in remembering that you suggested that there was some opposition to the placement of a CFC on that site?

**Mr COX** - Certainly, I am not sure to that site or whether it is simply associating it with the Port Dalrymple School. I do believe that has been a major reason why the parents do not want the CFC near that school.

**CHAIR** - Have you addressed your mind to a resolution of that conflict, if possible, particularly given your experience as a principal at the school?

**Mr COX** - I can fully understand them not wanting it in the school. I can also fully understand them not wanting it reasonably close to the school. But I think there is about a 200-metre walk between the closest building in that school and that particular corner there. Another possibility brings it 300 or 400 metres further on for the South George Town people and that is possibly taking it up to the north-western corner, which would be well away from any of the buildings in the Port Dalrymple School.



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**CHAIR** - Thanks very much.

**Mr BOOTH** - What about the Anne Street site?

**Mr COX** - The Anne Street site is closer to residential areas than the Memorial Hall site. That is clearly shown from that. I think it is ideal as far as a child and family centre is concerned because of the fact that it is fairly close to the centre of town. Yet it has a greater number of residential areas around it. I don't think the SIPS survey took account of a gravel pathway at the top end of what is Davey Street, which does provide a link with that north-eastern side of the town. It is some 300 metres further to walk for those people from South George Town, but it is much, much closer for those people from Northern George Town.

**Mr BOOTH** - In your professional opinion as an educator, would a stand-alone child and family centre on that side be better than the proposed hub development here with its co-located -

**Mr COX** - Yes, I do believe that.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you have an opinion then as a professional with regard to the co-location issues? You have heard other evidence here with regard to the incompatibility potentially of LINC and the library and access centre around the child and family centre. Do you have any commentary on that at all?

**Mr COX** - I cannot give one professionally; I have been too long out of school to be regarded as an expert on that. In my opinion, the two can be separate, especially in relation to the questions about reading because I do not believe you can centralise reading. When my wife was doing that she did not have a central office except for storage purposes. Her job was going around the community and I do not think you could collect people who want to read into a central area for that purpose. I think you are far better, instead of putting up a spider web and hoping they will fly into the web, being in a place where they are relaxed and enjoying something. I think you are far better to get them into the child and family centre and then use the facilities there in order to develop reading programs for those people who need it. I think that is a way which would be far less stressful for those people who cannot read. My wife found great difficulties at times with some of them and the biggest problem was the esteem value and the wish to make sure that nobody else knew that they could not read.

**Ms FLANAGAN** - I am following on from Peter. A lot of my submission has been covered. I did do a limited amount of literacy support at the training centre. It was not satisfactory because there was no private room to go to with the students. I was there to walk around in a class situation which went nowhere because nobody is going to put their hand up and request help and you just try and befriend and see if they want help. They did not want to let on to their mates that they needed help and they just passed you over. A couple whom I did work with, I could only go out with them into a little lounge area where everybody came out to use the drink machine or to sit and have their drink so that was totally unacceptable and against everything to do with literacy support. It would be ideal to have a classroom or a couple of little meeting rooms up there to work with those students.

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One of the teachers actually mentioned to me that really a lot of the students there needed to be having the literacy support before they started their courses up there; it would be much more ideal. I consider it to be a much better mix to have a classroom or something there. They all love their practical work that they do up there and they struggle with theory. It would be better if could have a room or smaller meeting rooms either for group work or just a one-on-one room. You could then work with them and they could do their bit of prac in the morning or the afternoon and work between doing some literacy and doing their theory. I cannot see those students relocating down to literacy rooms here in the main street. I think the time to be grabbing them and to have the focus is when they are on the spot. If you get them to turn up to their course there then that would make sense to be doing that there.

I think with adult literacy definitely you still need to have that privacy. I think we have so many places in the town - you have night use in the school and meeting rooms in other places. We have the magistrate's court room that has been unused for ages. There seem to be so many places where you could go and it would be more private than the main street. I wouldn't mind just mentioning a literacy tutor who was at Huonville. I don't think the Huonville LINC is in the main street, but it was on the *7.30 Report*, probably Thursday a week back. It's not much to read, but I think for where we're at, it's quite relevant:

Reporter: While Cameron Moran has been prepared to put in years of hard work to boost his skills, he says others are too proud to admit they need help.

The young fellow that was having some literacy help, they wouldn't touch it; they say they don't need it.

Reporter: Can there be a lot of shame and embarrassment when people come in?

Literacy tutor: Very much so. They want a tutor at the weekend where the streets are not so busy. We have clients who walk in with newspapers over their head. We've had clients who start the journey and then leave straightaway.

It's really important with regard to the literacy support that people have their privacy and they feel comfortable. I don't think the main street and Service Tasmania, the child and family centre and the library - I just think that's all way too public for people. You can't do it in private homes - in their home or your home - but ideally that's probably where you would get the best result.

Regarding the extension hall, I wonder what the duty of care is with the committee, because obviously that went before committee. I don't know how it would have been presented to the public works committee, and whether it was put forward as a gymnasium. I just don't know how it would have been presented because it doesn't really tick any boxes. As a sport hall, the aspect of the windows and all the glass and the dimensions are wrong as regards playing basketball. Also the width of it, to have spectators - it just doesn't add up, and yet they've put toilets and showers there. You

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can't hold a concert in it; the acoustics obviously are atrocious. So there we have the white elephant. I wonder how that got over the line.

I've been on the sport committee there for a couple of years. That facility would have been desperately used day-in, day-out up at the sports complex because we've got a very successful cricket club and a successful football club. The netball club up there desperately need an indoor facility with toilet and change rooms. All that money was spent there, and yet our sporting precinct got the chop and that doesn't tick any boxes. Now, here we are about to go with another one.

**CHAIR** - I think I heard you correctly when you were querying how it might have ticked the boxes for presentation to a public works committee.

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - It never came before a public works committee of the state parliament because it wasn't required to. It was differently funded; so it was just by negotiation by other groups - it may have been the council and the federal government. I have no idea, so it's not on the radar; it never was. But still your point about the usability is taken.

**Ms FLANAGAN** - I guess I would also like to mention that it is a heritage site. The Heritage Council obviously has no teeth because I can't see how you can denigrate that site. Regent Square and government priorities - it was all about symmetry. The Square, the symmetry coming in from the diagonal, so we're taking out a diagonal now, if this goes ahead. The choice of architecture was deconstructivism on both of them and that is the contemporary form. It is controlled chaos creating discomfort and confusion. It certainly succeeded did it not, with that extension hall?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - That is from the heritage architect. He actually said his mates must have been asleep at the wheel when they ticked it off but they have gone and done it again. Nobody has made mention of it but there obviously has to be a fence around the children's playground and it has to be built to regulation. You have got zero-to-fives and this is a heritage park so we are going to have to have a fence. What is going to be the height of the fence, because we are backing on to a road and a footpath which has to come in with access at the back of it? I just wonder if that is being factored in. This is a heritage site and it should be an iconic park. I think, as I said in my submission, it would be far better value to this community's health and wellbeing to be the best picnic park and to have day trippers up here. I am sure we would get far more money spent in the local shops with people coming up and just taking in all of the sites in George Town and Low Head and picnicking there, or using it as a base with all of the other heritage activities that we have. This centre place there just takes out Regent Square and that historic aspect and destroys it. Are there any questions? I think that is enough.

**Mr BOOTH** - Getting back to what you said about literacy, do you believe that the location on Regent Square for those programs could, in fact, have a detrimental outcome to literacy rather than improving it?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - I personally do not think it is the right model. I can see that it is definitely needed up at the trade and training centre. Obviously the high schools and the primary schools are all going to be having specialist literacy teachers going into them

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now just because of where Tassie is at. That is an educational decision, so that is happening into the schools. So, we really have to be covering adults and the ones in the tertiary sector. I think it could be easily done with other rooms and meeting rooms that we have already supplied. I just do not think the duplication is justified.

**Mr BOOTH** - Given what you said about the privacy issues that people require, would it be potentially detrimental or an adverse outcome?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes, I think so because I have been here at Service Tasmania in the council chambers with clients speaking on the phone. It has been absolutely ghastly; it must be awful for the staff but for somebody to be there with small children, I just do not think privacy-wise that that set up is going to work - mixing Service Tasmania and the LINC.

**Mr BOOTH** - So given the previous issues associated with the hall, for example, nobody uses that now next to the -

**Ms FLANAGAN** - It is very limited.

**Mr BOOTH** - So, you are afraid that this effectively could become the son of the white elephant?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes. I think the community needs to be getting its head around how we can better utilise that hall to get some value out of it because at the moment, we are not.

**Mr BOOTH** - So would you see that the construction of the hub would be an appropriate use of public money?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - No.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you believe there is a need for a child and family centre somewhere?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes.

**Mr BOOTH** - Would you support a stand-alone child and family centre in a different location?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes.

**Mr BOOTH** - Getting back to the compatibility issue again, are you saying that by combining those services together, it has an adverse outcome, potentially, on literacy? Do you feel then, to construct the hub, that it would be fit for purpose?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - No. I don't think it is fit for purpose. I'm not qualified to be speaking literacy-wise. I have done some limited tutoring. I don't see it as a legitimate spend.

**Mr BOOTH** - Are you clearly of the view that these services should be conducted separately in discreet locations in an appropriate place?

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**Ms FLANAGAN** - Yes, definitely. From my experience, it would be brilliant to have something at the Trade Training or in very easy walking distance for them.

**Mr BOOTH** - With regard to Regent Square itself, you spoke about other uses of the area, for example the George Town Folk Festival. Are festivals like that impinged already by the sports hall that has been built there and would they be impinged by the construction of the hub?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - No. We use the hall. The acoustics are really bad but we need it as a venue. We do hold a dance in there and maybe of couple of workshops.

**Mr BOOTH** - What about the hub, would that have an effect on other users of the Regent Square other than the visual amenity?

**Ms FLANAGAN** - Definitely the visual amenity. I think that trying to get heritage tourism would be very heavily affected because of the walking tours that they do. You've got the men's boat shed adjacent and I am certain that could be utilised for some activities on the square. They could be involved in some activities that day trippers could be partaking in.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you.

**Mr NEILSON** - I have prepared a working document to go through with you in a moment but I will make some quick comments that I've made through the day. I came to this town in 1973 and I was the deputy head of what is now Port Dalrymple School when it was in the primary section. It was the second biggest school in the state. There were high-income families here and things were really booming. Later on, when I left that profession, I bought a business with my wife and we ran a travel agency and a real estate agency. I think I've been into pretty well every house in this town including, you might like to know, there are about 40 per cent rentals in this town. That is a significant factor in the town.

We have travelled widely and compared the town. I was very interested in what was said about saving the Main Street before because Sue and I have done a lot of study of this in the UK and in towns in Australia. We own property in the Main Street so we want to keep it vibrant and so we've done a lot of study about that.

The friends of Regent Square have come out of the woodwork, it's a wake-up call. We have a square that's 200 years old. We've just planted 200 trees. It was never meant to be something like Franklin Square or Princes Park, it was a small town recreation ground. We've moved on now. It has been badly neglected. The new building has damned it. For three months of this year you couldn't walk even on the paths and I fear a new building is going to damn it even further and I can see no money in the budget. This will be another impost on the rate payers of George Town.

Much has been said recently about the new hall. It was a suggestion from my good wife who said, 'Why don't we make something of that monstrosity and turn that into the child and family centre?' The government can pay the council the \$3 million they owe on it and with that \$3 million the council can transfer that debt and build a proper sports centre either at the school or at the sports complex.

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**Ms FLANAGAN** - A commercial kitchen in it.

**Mr NEILSON** - Yes, it's got a commercial kitchen and everything in it. They could do a lot of training and it could be an adjunct to something. That's worth looking at. It was raised at the last AGM and it received applause.

Delegates, you are probably not going to believe me but I have sworn on an oath, last Wednesday was the first day I saw plans to this hub with measurements. I was a councillor for four years. It was the first time I saw plans that told me the width and the depth of the building. I knew it was tall, 6.8 metres or something, called single storey and I knew it was 3.7 metres from the existing monstrosity hall. Three point seven metres is the width of a carport. You are going to look between two tall buildings down a narrow alley with four projections - a nightmare for security, social misbehaviour and we were insulted at the hearings to say that it would be vistas of the park. This community has been treated very badly with this whole process.

**Mr BOOTH** - Could you just explain why it is that you were able to see the plans only just last Wednesday?

**Mr NEILSON** - It's out of our control. When it came before council there no measurements at all of the width or the depth. There were no concise measurements of the specified departure. In fact, during the last TPC hearing it kept moving every day. The first three days the solicitor came back and said, 'We have to make it bigger' and at the end of the day they said, 'Sorry, we can't really define the area, what you see is what you get', in essence.

It wasn't until I read this paper here - this was the advertising of these proceedings - and it said that we could ring a gentleman in Hobart, a Mr Todd Williams, and I rang and I got an answering service. It said you can ring Mr Todd Williams to get the details of the proposed works. I thought, well, I'll ring. I got his answering service that said he was on leave, but to ring somebody else, but no number. I didn't know but I now know they were from the education department. With the help of Shane I was able to get onto this gentleman and he said, 'I don't know anything about it.' I thanked Mr Finch for ringing me, but he could not give me the details for here. He said to me words to the effect - and I did write them down - 'I know what the building is, it's a building down on the corner next to the other building near the road.' That was the explanation of this works. We are at the pointy end now. You people are the third umpire and we are at the pointy end, so I came up on his advice to the council the day after the submissions closed and we were allowed to see the changes that had been made to the drawing after the TPC hearing, and they had taken away the bus station. I'll come to that a little bit when I work through because there is some documentation there.

We weren't allowed to have a copy, but it was the first time that I saw measurements that allowed me to know how wide the building was, how deep the building was and how far it went back. Those flags today that you saw I put in using those measurements this morning on the request of Ivan Dean.

While I'm talking about Ivan Dean, he has been so helpful when Sue and I approached to offer this land, but I must say, gentlemen, I am very seriously concerned about the rights of individuals and small-town people to utilise their independent members of the

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Legislative Council. Here we have our representative and he has been persistent in asking questions and he reports back to me that he has been not told the truth. He reports back to me that the council will not talk with him on various issues in relation to that.

I have always been a believer in the upper House, the independent Legislative Council, being the ultimate third umpire to be able to see when things go wrong in process. I'm getting the messages that our wonderful member in Ivan Dean is having his hands tied behind his back. I won't say any more about that.

**Mr BOOTH** - If I could just ask you then with regard to the process, you are saying the entire community had no idea what this building was going to look like until last Wednesday?

**Mr NEILSON** - Absolutely. I found this daunting. Sue and I have had a lot of experience in planning and in real estate, but we sought the help of Pitt & Sherry and Mr Ian Abernathy, a senior planner with the Launceston Council before he went into private enterprise, and we commissioned a report. It cost a lot of money, I can tell you, but his professional judgment was that the process was fatally flawed - they are his words, not mine.

**Mr BOOTH** - Would you be prepared to table that, please?

**Mr NEILSON** - Absolutely. During the nine days of hearing, Sue and I had a previous engagement and we again commissioned Mr Abernathy to come and sit with us, and he was quizzed whether he was an expert or representing us. He said he was representing us on the day, which we asked him to. I would love to have had him there for nine days, but we haven't got that sort of money. He said he was here representing us on that day, and the commission took it from that that he was not an expert witness. It was deplorable.

The way that Sue and I have been treated and the way that we've offered this land is nothing short of - well, I won't say the words that we do say around our kitchen tables. The plans have been changed but no attempt has been made to move that building if it were - heaven forbid - to go on that corner over to accommodate the land that has been made available with the removal of the bus depot. That would have opened up the area between the two. They haven't even been creative when they've redone the plans, but I'll come to that in a moment, because it's not - as we have heard this morning - that it's the first choice. I'm just so uptight about the absolute mistruths that I've heard during this hearing, gentlemen.

**Mr BOOTH** - With regard to the community input to this current approved hub development, are you saying that you only saw it last Wednesday?

**Mr NEILSON** - Absolutely. Nobody else would have either.

**Mr BOOTH** - So there has been no public advertising of this plan; there's been no public -

**Mr NEILSON** - There have been plans, but no measurements, Mr Booth, absolutely no measurements showing the width or the - unless you took along a slide rule and

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happened to be able to see the full plan that you could use a slide rule on. But we're not all that smart.

**Mr BOOTH** - Did the council refuse to provide you with the measurements?

**Mr NEILSON** - They didn't get a plan until it came back after the planning commission said that there needed to be some alterations. During the whole process that the council went through, the whole process that RMPAT had been through and it got thrown out, the whole process when it first went before the TPC, and then at appeal, there were no measurements. In fact, at the last appeal, on day 1 or 2, when we asked for a site inspection, I asked could we have a measurement to show the boundaries of the building. It was rejected by Mr Turner, the DPP representative, and the chair agreed with him. So we never knew the footprint of the building.

This will go down in history in Tasmania, Australia, and maybe in all civilised countries, that a project of huge monetary value, for the size of the state we're in, can get through the system, right to here, the day after your submissions closed, and nobody knows the measurements - how wide or how deep it is. I was insulted when I heard today that there has been consultation with the numerous other sites and consultation with key community stakeholders. That is an absolutely false statement, and in regard to the investigation of the other sites, this community, through its council, asked for the council to have a look and give a report.

They did that in January, I think, of 2010; it took 10 months for the report to come to back. I wrote to the mayor of this town and asked could I come and speak with him, because we were trying to do it surreptitiously, without making a fanfare about the donation of the land, and the mayor refused to speak. He said your only avenue is to speak with the proponents - the Education Department. So any commentary that the council were involved in alternative sites is a blatant misrepresentation of the truth.

**Mr BOOTH** - How did the council assess it, then? How did they submit to the TPC?

**Mr NEILSON** - What I just said came before that. I haven't got it with me but I can table it; it was about a two page, and let me say, a rather biased document. All they did was to take the sites - there was the YMCA site, the Elderly Citizens site that was next to this building; there was our site; there was I think one at the school and they took the footprint of this proposed building and just overlaid it on those sites.

We heard from a qualified architect today, 'You don't do it that way. You design a building for a particular site' - and that is probably good advice. But, of course, it came up that it wouldn't fit next door to here. It almost did but that was assuming that it had to be a LINC hub with all the whistles and bells and all the rest.

**Mr BOOTH** - The council assessment then, did they have their plan or assess this thing?

**Mr NEILSON** - No, it was a report from the general manager, I believe.

**Mr BOOTH** - There was no advertising - none of that?



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**Mr NEILSON** - No, it was just a two-page document to do an assessment of the sites which took 10 months to produce. It was a direction of the elected members to the general manager to produce a document for alternative sites and it took 10 months. All the time it is ticking away and the government is spending thousands and thousands of dollars proceeding to design a building that they did not have a licence to build on - and I will come to that later. While I am saying that, I can't understand why anyone in a coastal town would plan a playground facing into the north-west. You can talk about 16 corners and glass for the parents to sit behind but think about the kids. I live in this town, we all live in this town and you do not build a recreation area facing into the north-west. You just don't do it, unless you want to get blown away. So it is an expensive exercise but I won't go into the other flaws of that building.

**Mr BOOTH** - I am sorry to keep getting back to this but I am very interested in the council's role in the approval and submission to the TPC - are you saying that they didn't consider any of those things? I mean, they must have supported that.

**Mr NEILSON** - Kim, what you have to realise is the community was not empowered one iota. We were absolutely insignificant. If you come into these chambers with a plan for a carport or another minor matter that needs to go before the planning, there is a timescale that you have to be so many days before the meeting. It is usually, if they can do it, the Tuesday or the Wednesday. It was the week of Show Week; it landed on the council's desk on the Friday morning and the agendas are out at midday. So here is a \$6.9 million project that lands on the desk of the planner at 8.30 and it is assessed - 63 pages - and put into the agenda to go on the Friday afternoon to the elected members. They sat in this room and three of them showed enormous commonsense and said, 'We can't absorb this; we need more time. Please, can we have more time?'. They put it to the vote and it was a no. So the debate started, and if I can paraphrase, one councillor said we need a facility for children; a second councillor said Regent Park is a swamp owned by the government and they should be able to put on it what they want. That defies all planning schemes. Nobody who owns a block of land can put on it what they want. You can't put a butcher shop in the front yard of your house even though you own it. That is a ridiculous statement. The third councillor said, 'I'll move that the motion be put. All those in favour? Ayes 6, Against 3' - gone! We have been completely cut out.

**Mr BOOTH** - Could I ask if any councillors had publicly committed to supporting the project prior to that meeting?

**Mr NEILSON** - They didn't have a lot of chance, but I will say this. It is probably a fault of many councils, but when you assess something in planning you assess it on planning grounds. You don't assess a restaurant on whether there is not enough restaurants in town; you assess it on whether it meets the health standards or can provide enough parking, or the lighting - a whole range of issues. In this case I didn't expect any councillor to say, 'We don't need a child and family centre', but they were simply not aware of how the community felt. If they had got out and asked or if they had listened it may have been a different viewpoint. Three of them said this has just been put together. There is no way known that you can assess a project like this in a few hours. There was no objective assessment of the proposal.

**Mr BOOTH** - That is the point I am trying to get to. Did councillors turn up to the meeting with a closed mind already?

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**Mr NEILSON** - I think most of you in the committee have had something to do with government. The planner was not available to address the councillors or ask the questions. When one councillor said - and this has happened on a couple of occasions - 'Who will we ask if we need to clarify a planning matter?', the answer was, 'The general manager will do that'. This council employs a planner. If I was on council - and when I was on council - I expect the planning matter to be addressed through the general manager or the mayor, but I expected that expert advice. In fact they sign off under the relevant section that the advice to councillors will be from a qualified person. I don't believe the council was acting as a planning authority. If we had the dollars we would test that in the courts, but we have already spent, as a community, probably \$25 000 appealing this atrocious proposition. There is a limit to our funds.

**Mr BOOTH** - I would like to go through that with you at some point in time - the detail, the community involvement.

**Mr NEILSON** - I think my working sheets probably show that, especially in regards to parking, but I am happy to come back to meet -

**Mr BOOTH** - I am interested to have articulated in *Hansard* exactly what you went through. You said you spent \$25 000 as a community trying to do the job perhaps that council should have done for you and what has happened to you as a result.

**Mr NEILSON** - When you spend quite a proportion of that - the vast majority - at a RMPAT hearing and you win - especially as the council had been told, as you have heard earlier, that if they proceeded with it, it would be in breach of their planning scheme. It went to RMPAT and it got thrown out. That should have been the end of the story for two years, but as Mr Abernathy said, it is not illegal but it is very cunning - through the backdoor with section 43A, which in effect sets aside the George Town planning scheme. The government could have said, 'We will put a pig farm on that corner'. There was no planning scheme. The politicians like to say it has gone through proper process; they forget to say it got overturned by RMPAT. The Tasmanian Planning Commission said, 'We cannot look at process'. Mr Ramsay sat there every day and said, 'We cannot look at process. Your only avenue for process is through the Supreme Court', because that was the end of the story. We have not got those dollars. We certainly got a quote but it was going to cost us well over \$100 000. Even for us to put in a section 64 against this parking thing we have to look at a possible debt of \$30 000. It is an impost on a community that does not need this. We do not need this. What we do need is a child and family centre. Where we do not need it is on Regent Square, because there are a lot of alternatives. On the way to that, and I hope it is rejected and a child and family centre comes back for quick approval by this community, can we please have the measurements of it?

*Laughter.*

**Mr NEILSON** - We heard that there was going to repetition of the form of the new hall. Please, don't inflict that on us. Two wrongs do not make a right. There have been some questions asked about the new hall. I follow the statistics from the council every month. The new hall has a hall space, a kitchen, a supper room and a couple of other rooms - five in total. They are used, on the last figures I checked, for an average of 36 minutes

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per room per day, and the ratepayers of this town owe somewhere between \$2.5 million and \$3 million. Not a good business decision.

That is a historical corner by anybody's reckoning. The council has drawn up plans for when the dollars are there for us to have a nautical precinct from that corner down to the pier. That is where the ship came in to settle northern Tasmania. Somewhere up that road and quite possibly on the corner, Ms Edmunds, who is buried at Longford, had the first white child in northern Van Diemen's Land. On one corner you have a wonderful historic home where our good Dr Jane lives. That was part and parcel of the cable station. You have, where Mrs Goods lives, the historic Witterson's Bakery, and you have the iconic Mario's corner, the Art deco, showing growth in the 1950s. You have the Bass and Flinders Centre, the icon there, and next door to that you have the building where Batman and Faulkner left to settle Melbourne. It is a historic precinct. The place oozes history and we are going to put in a building that has a sense of this and a sense of that and a closeness of this and it has a bit of copper and wood and plywood - give us a break. We have not a lot left but what we have we want to keep.

People get disappointed when they come to George Town because it is not a Ross, not a Richmond, not an Oatlands, but it is a place of history and we are all busting our guts to build that into a story. A museum is not about the artefacts; it is about the story that goes with it. Let us not destroy it from the whim of some bureaucrats and some well-meaning architects who want to force something onto us that is not the best option. Please reject this on the basis of commonsense and come back with something that brings us together and meets the needs. I do not think that is too big an ask.

By the way when I did have a close look there are 14 toilet pans in this building; I think that is more than the convention centre in Launceston.

**CHAIR** - Graeme, can I get an indication from you as to whether you are, at this moment, working through these other documents because -

**Mr NEILSON** - No, I am not. I was only trying to rebut some of the matters. I am willing to leave those but there are certainly some valid points in there.

**CHAIR** - I do not want to in any way divert you but we do have other witnesses yet to hear from. The committee has had provided to it the historical track through the Tasmanian Planning Commission. We can, and most likely have, read that.

**Mr BOOTH** - If he does have rebuttal of evidence we should hear at least those rebuttals where there is evidence -

**Mr NEILSON** - In George Town, because we have the river, and industrial land to the south, the only way this town can grow is north and north-east. That is where we have the concentration of housing, built for workers and now a lot of it is government-owned housing. The town's geographical centre will move north-east towards the primary school and so forth. The town centre will, by comparison, be further south.

I have a summary about George Town car parking availability. Between 1953 and 2007, on the east and west car parks that you saw today, we had a 130 car parks that were built

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by the community. The Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the Apex Club and all built it, plus 30 sites behind the old hall. That was 160 car parks up until 2007.

In 2007 when the hall development extension took place we lost 50 places - about 30 around the back and some other spaces in the front. The council conditioned a requirement for an additional 120 car parks, which you have heard, and they have spent about \$87 000 on that gravel patch that we are told today isn't a car park. I have it on record where the lead minister, the Premier, calls it a car park.

Between 2011 and 2013, the proposed hub LINC, as determined by the proponent's traffic expert, was to require 90 spaces, but not a requirement of approval. The development was to be built on the site of a 60-space semi-developed car park. Here is the calculation before you. Sealed spaces currently available - 105 along Macquarie Street, plus 15 at the back of the new hall; that is 120. To be built or required to be built - nil, less the 90 that will be required for the hub LINC. This is the first time I have ever seen the council approve a project without asking for parking. We had a little coffee shop open a couple of years ago and they said, 'grab five or you can pay \$2 500'. If you take off that 90, it leaves only 30 in reality for our CBD.

We have a unique town where we have Woolworths down a side street. It was built and they did not have to put in the 253 car parks as per the planning scheme, because they simply didn't have the space to do it. The council of the day said we want the supermarket central, but we have a nice town car park going the full length of the main centre. The government comes along and says, 'You've got 105 left there now; that meets our 90, so we will have them'. What is that going to do to the shopkeepers in the future? What is it going to be like in a time of recovery or development? Are we going to have more car parks? There is only one place, and that is on Regent Square. There is no other room. We have York Cove and we have shops and we have a sprinkling of houses either side.

If you turn to the first plan, this was in 2007 and it is clearly marked 'tender'. I associate that with the building of a hall, which I have marked, and it shows the location of the car park where the government want to build the hub. The next page is taken from the landscape design, again in December 2007, and it is virtually the same. The council, through all this, have said, 'We had no plans to complete this car park'. What a load of nonsense.

The next page is showing the line marking in the Main Street. Most of the Main Street is half hour parking. There is a few one-hour parks and then it is unlimited parking in the east and west. It clearly shows the car park layout where half of it is gravel. Some \$87 000 has been spent there on base. The mayor refers to it as overflow car park and the Premier as a car park. It is a car park. If it quacks like a duck, you know what it is.

The next one is the biggest deceit that I have ever seen in my time in local government. This plan was presented to the TPC hearing on day 9. The council has done a very cheeky and amateurish overlay and they presented to the Tasmanian Planning Commission that they never intended to build a car park. In one stroke, on day 1 of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, they were asked to present their car parking plans, and on day 9 they presented this - a complete deceit of the facts. Questions were asked. The next planner's letter is a letter signed by the mayor of this town. It is in response to

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question in public question time about why on day nine they presented a plan that showed the cancelling of the car park. 'I am advised that the plan you referred to was drawn by council's engineer in December 2011, following a review of outstanding conditions relating to the DA which was for the new hall.' So There is a DA in place to build the car park, but without any reference to the elected members they have said, 'We are not going to build. We don't need the 120.'

The next page, 6 March 2007, clearly shows you the DA. 'Number 14 - onsite parking. Off-street car parking shall be provided to incorporate a total of 120 car parking bays.' Down the bottom, 'The basis of approval of the development shall be undertaken in accordance with drawings.' That is standard stuff. But at the hearing they said all you have to do is produce a plan, not build it, that satisfies it. It is like getting approval to build a swimming pool and it says you have to give the council a plan of your security fencing, and not build the fence, and say, 'but I produced the plan'. Try that one in the coroner's office. It is absolutely obscene that a council can say, and the TPC can be told by the DPP man, council has produced the plan on the pretence that the wording of that says that they are to provide a plan.

On day 8, the TPC went away and said, 'No, that's it. A-two day hearing has stretched to eight; we are not coming back.' Then they had a close look at Mr Eaton's evidence - four hours counting cars in the school holidays. They said, 'This isn't kosher. This doesn't address the shopping.' They said, 'Come back on day nine and produce a layout plan, a location, a clarification, confirmation, show the calculations, summarise this and summarise that, confirm your calculations, provide a statement'. They said to the council, 'You have to come back and show us your car parking plans'. It's then that they gave this one with the overlay. But Mr Eaton, on day 9, came back to the hearing empty-handed. He didn't bring any new evidence and everybody walked out of that room and said they couldn't possibly confirm this, but they did.

I would like to think that the TPC is fiercely independent but when they convene a ninth day and ask for details, which you will read, and it's not presented, then I wonder.

The third plan shows the proposed George Town hub, and it shows the new road in. It says - this is an Artas plan - 'new access road by others'. Does that mean the ratepayers of George Town? Then it shows 'future car park by others'. Well, the car park is there. It's not formalised. That means it hasn't got the lines there, but that car park at the back was built as part of the 120 to service the hall and a turning circle for emergency service, which is another condition. Then if you look at the bottom of the plan it shows existing parking bordering Macquarie Street. But then it shows 'other parking'. It doesn't call it 'existing', but on a lot of plans they've said 'new car park'. That's where the bus is. That's a car park - it's a duck and it quacks. There has been so much deceit. I can see no reason why this project cannot be rejected.

My next plan I've headed 'Misleading 6 per cent'. What I've done is colour in the footprint of this hub, plus the roadway, plus the parking that they have commandeered from us. Now if that's 6 per cent of the square I'm going for lessons in remedial maths.

The next is a four-page document of community consultation, and possibly this may address some of the issues that Mr Booth and others wanted. It highlights 10 December 2012 and it mentions the 200 people who attended the public meeting. But more

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importantly the annual general meeting on 10 December was the largest annual general meeting ever attended in George Town, and probably any council in Tasmania. The resolutions were passed virtually unanimously that 'this meeting opposes the proposed new hub; no new buildings to be erected on Regent Square; the library and online centre stay in Memorial Hall; the child and family centre be located elsewhere, but not on Regent Square; George Town council take steps to ensure the preservation of Regent Square and its heritage values; George Town council continue to enhance Regent Square'. Passed, sent to council; next meeting we move that those motions be noted - no talk with the community, just noted.

There is a lease. This is a little bit like the measurements; it was never, ever presented. It has been what you might say folklore that nothing could be build on Regent Square. The general managers and mayors over time have said nothing can be built on Regent Square. This is a lease signed in 1974 between the crown and the warden and residents of George Town. I understand leases but there has been no negotiation between the parties of the leases. They prepare plans for a building but did not do their paperwork to see. If you lease some land for 100 years to graze cattle, the owner cannot come along and say, 'In the corner I am going to build a house'. The lessee says no. I have leased this for 100 years; it is my ground while I lease it from you. But this is what the lease says:

That the lessee will not assign, underlet or part with the possession of the said demised premises or part of, and that the lessee will no use or suffer to be used the said demised premises for any purpose whatsoever other than the purpose of public recreation and amusement.

Then further down is where our council sold us out:

provided always that hereby expressly agreed and declared that the presents are upon expressed condition that if and whenever there shall be a breach or non-observance by on or part of the lessee of any other covenants or agreements on the part of the lessee herein contained, then subject to the provision of subsection (2) section (8) of the Crown Lands act and the said terms 99 years of the residue, therefore the said demised premises shall be absolutely forfeited and shall revert to Her Majesty.

So when we give away that corner we are not giving away that corner; the people of George Town have said goodbye to the full curtilage of the square. You must reject this proposal and come back with proper process.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**