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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

GEORGE TOWN HUB

Mr ANDREW FINCH, DEPUTY SECRETARY, CORPORATE SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; Ms JENNY RAYNER, DIRECTOR, LINC TASMANIA; Ms CHERYL LARCOMBE, PRINCIPAL PROJECT OFFICER, EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOLS, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; AND Mr HEATH CLAYTON, PRINCIPAL, ARTAS ARCHITECTS, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Welcome to everybody. We understand, as a committee, that there has been longstanding community conversation about this and so people are aware that this is a process of parliament that this committee is tasked with assessing any project above \$5 million as to public expenditure. By way of information it might be helpful if I explain to, particularly members of the George Town public, that this committee does not have any authority to vary a project which is submitted to it. The committee only has authority under the law to either reject or approve the project which we have in front of us. I thought it was appropriate to mention that in case there was any misunderstanding as to the authority of this committee. We can't sit here and make judgments about the particular project and say we want it amended in these terms; we do not have that remit at all. With that, we will commence the proceedings.

Can I indicate to you a simple procedural matter where His Excellency writes to the committee and indicates to us what the terms of the project are. It is a formal process to indicate to us that the expected price is \$6.4 million.

The usual process of these committees is that we invite the proponents of the project, being the delegation in front of us, to make your presentation. We try to keep questions until the end of your presentation but nonetheless it is often productive for us to interact with you as you lead your evidence so we will take it and see how that goes but we will try the usual process and keep our questions but sometimes it is unavoidable.

Mr FINCH - I thank you for the opportunity to introduce this important project for the George Town community. Our submission seeks the approval of the committee to establish an integrated services hub to benefit the community of George Town. The proposed George Town hub at Regent Square will operate as an integrated service centre, where the three principal partners, LINC - Learning Information Network Centre - Tasmania, Service Tasmania and a child and family centre will work in collaboration to deliver a range of integrated services for the George Town community. The hub will bring together under one roof a range of complementary state government services that provide access to information, learning, government transactions and services for children and families in a friendly and welcoming setting. The hub model ensures that clients who visit the building for any one service are exposed to a new range of

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opportunities including adult literacy support, adult learning programs and services vital to the health and development of children.

The hub will provide library and information services, computers and internet access, public meeting spaces, community training programs, and learning and literacy support.

Child and family centres are multi-service centres which aim to meet the health and wellbeing, education and care needs of local children from before birth to age 5, as well as supporting and empowering families in their parenting role, strengthening local communities and offering pathways to employment. Child and family centres are part of the government's comprehensive strategy to give children the best possible start in life. The vision is that children are healthy, safe and curious learners, nurtured by confident, capable families, living in supportive communities.

Our hub model is already benefiting other communities with promising results. Given its success in delivering a wide range of joined-up, integrated services and innovative programs in a regional community, the Huon LINC at Huonville opened in 2005 and has provided a model for the subsequent development of the hub concept. The community services hubs model builds upon the early success of the Huon LINC. It brings together major state government initiatives with complimentary objectives, and is aligned with national service integration developments.

The Huon, West Coast, Bridgewater and Scottsdale hubs are bringing their communities together, boosting morale and providing education and care services to children to give them the best start in life. Long-term benefits will include increased levels of employment and lower welfare dependency.

In terms of the specific location of the hub, this is considered crucial to its success. The following principles have been used in considering an appropriate location: close to shops and other services such as banks, supermarkets, cafes, to attract clientele whilst performing other business; high level of street appeal and visibility to passing traffic; easy pedestrian access for convenient parking or public transport points, and the ability to undertake multiple tasks from a single starting point; suitable for out-of-hours access, good street presence and visibility with activity levels after hours to increase security of staff and clients; land in public ownership; the budget does not include a land acquisition component.

The Regent Square site meets all the above principles for the hub. It is centrally located in the town centre. It would be in close proximity to other services, such as doctors, chemists, supermarkets, banks and the council. The Regent Square location is easily accessible and close to parking and public transport. The new building has been designed to minimise the impact on the square. It has been designed to sit alongside other civic buildings that are already on the square. The new building will only take up around 6.4 per cent of the total land area.

Importantly, numerous other sites were considered, however, these did not meet all the above principles, particularly the central location of Regent Square, better public access and proximity to shops and other services.

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In conclusion, the selected site was chosen by key community stakeholders. The Department of Education has followed all due processes over several years throughout the planning, consultation and development stages of the project and also through several statutory processes including town planning and heritage considerations, with the best interests of the community in mind.

The collaborative approach to service delivery through the hub concept is bringing about real change in people's lives and improving outcomes for the whole community. The George Town hub will improve outcomes for the George Town community by bringing together a wide range of services in a modern, purpose-built and accessible facility. We are now ready to start this important project for the people of George Town and seek the community's approval to proceed.

Mr CLAYTON - The new hub is located on the edge of the central public open space of Regent Square. It is sited directly adjacent to the Memorial Hall at the end of George Town's primary commercial precinct. The placement of the hub is a central location for ease of public access and a building that provides numerous community civic services. The portion of Regent Square designated to be developed for the George Town hub is only a further 6.39 per cent, bringing the total developed area to just over 20 per cent and the square will remain the township's central public open space.

An important factor that we have incorporated in the design is the creation of a pedestrian link between the proposed new hub and the existing Memorial Hall. This avenue will provide a strong physical connection and formalise the pedestrian access into the square. This avenue steps in and out and along an access path. This creates a wider landscaped zone that, appropriately planted, produces a softer edge.

There is a distinct high contrast between the original brick-paved Memorial Hall and the newer recreation extension. The hub uses this idea of repeating forms that also contrast in height and scale. Breaking down the building in this way not only relates to the adjacent hall but visually reduces the building's mass and provides interest at the perimeter.

The new hub repeats the formal arrangement of the existing Memorial Hall but is asymmetrical, lower in height and creates a visual interest through its relationship with the adjacent buildings. Like the Memorial Hall, the new hub contrasts both horizontally in plan and vertically in elevation so the facade moves in and out and up and down. The building decreases in volume towards Regent Square and also towards Elizabeth Street. This edge accommodates the LINC, the lounges and meeting rooms. The articulation of the building wraps into the western facade, Elizabeth Street, and then the forms change to more circular elements suggesting a lighthouse and relationship to the sea and naval history. The roof on the northern elevation facing Regent Square is organic and free-form; it is playful and suggests movement which defines an activity focused on children.

The internal building volume relates to the functional and spatial requirements of the civic use and the users' end needs. The total floor area is 1 494 square metres to accommodate the functional brief of the integrated service. The design incorporates the variation in roof form and height to visually reduce the overall volume.

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The material palettes used reflect the materials of the existing hall with concrete, panelled glass, aged copper and terracotta. The hub looks to combine the use of these materials to compliment the new with the old. The new building retains and extends the formal forecourt of the existing Memorial Hall.

The build edge relates to the commercial precinct on the main street. The new hub will support civic activities relating to the access and information networks. Where Regent Square meets the Memorial Hall and the extension, there is a strong vertical edge created by the Memorial Hall and the hub continues this vertical edge and fills the gap to define the square.

The northern edge adjacent to the square will provide over 900 square metres of high-quality, landscaped recreational space, dedicated to experimental play for children under the age of five. The new planting will be endemic to the area, attracting birds, butterflies and other animals. The landscape elements will be seen and appreciated from Regent Square.

To provide shade and to help articulate the facades of the buildings either side of the pedestrian link, small, upright trees are provided and they are planted with mature stock. The other landscaping is sympathetic and meets the council requirements.

CHAIR - This question would go to Andrew about the consultation process. You have indicated in your evidence that you have followed due process et cetera. Can you advise the committee what the process was expected of the local enabling group, what their role was and what input they had to the process? To round that question out, is it a fact that particular group took a vote as to their preference for a stand-alone child and family centre, and is it true that vote was 27:0 in favour of a stand-alone child and family centre? First, the question about the process of the local enabling group and then the specific question about the vote.

Mr FINCH - We'll break that down into earlier on in the process, which was in about 2009 when a LEG group was formed, broadly constituted with parent representatives, members of Neighbourhood House, members of Gateway, Anglicare, our community inclusion worker and community member from the department, representatives of schools - a broadly constituted committee. They met on several occasions and agreed that their preference was to integrate with the LINC, for all those reasons that we have already talked about, in the town centre and rather than being at a separate location. At that stage there were a number of sites being considered, including the school sites but there were some concerns around the schools sites as they could potentially alienate a number of clients, whereas integration with the LINC offered clients a wider range of services and access to the broader community. The LEG group determined that they wanted to integrate with the LINC and be in the centre of town. A number of sites were considered and the Regent Square site was considered the best site, both to suit the physical characteristics required for a centre of this size as well as, importantly, the access to shops and other services. That occurred in 2009.

Over a period of time, we went through a process of trying to get this important facility built and there have been many delays which have all been important to

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Mr FINCH - which have all been important to consolidate the planning arrangements and heritage issues that I mentioned in the introduction. Through that time, from 2009 to 2013, people have started to think about other options - 'If our distinct preferred option does not become available through these other processes that are occurring, what might we do?'. I think we have seen this morning that some of the children's services people are trying to operate from at the moment are completely substandard. People have had a long road; they have obviously been frustrated about not having the centre so, it is only natural that people have thought, 'If this does not happen, what might we do so?'. Other options have obviously come into play because the primary, distinct, preferred option has been considered at threat for various reasons across the journey.

So, it is fair to say that at a point - I think it was probably around this time last year - when we consulted again with LEG group around a site that was offered for donation in Anne Street. We had feedback from the LEG group that that site was not considered suitable for a CFC, given its proximity to other services. That was the first important decision they made and then whilst they were considering that site issue, they then also discussed the option of what they might do if the distinct first preference was not available. They did agree that if that was the case, if the site was not going to be available, that they would obviously want a site and have a stand-alone CFC. My point is that we have had a long journey. People have started to become frustrated about the process and obviously want this important service for the community. Across that journey, other options have come into play and other fall-back considerations. But the point remains that there is a clear, distinct preference for a hub - a combined joined-up service provision for the community and that remains today.

CHAIR - In terms of my other part of that question, Andrew, it was whether the LEG took a vote at one stage. My understanding was that that was a 27:nil in favour of, and you have given a snapshot of the historical journey. But if my suggestion to you of the 27: nil vote for a stand-alone CFC is correct, when was that vote taken?

Mr FINCH - I have a report here from the parents and friends of the George Town Child and Family Centre which was done around the Anne Street site assessment. As I mentioned, it was about 12 months ago; it was actually 30 August 2012. This record I have indicates it was 22 votes for a stand-alone CFC at Regent Square at the time; so, not 27 but 22.

CHAIR - Was that 22:0?

Mr FINCH - Yes, 22:0. But again, it is important that we take that in the context that it was discussed.

CHAIR - Still on that same thread of the consultation process - and I am relying on page 15 of the department's submission, and that is sitting around the planning commission's reported process; we appreciate the fact that you have provided that historical information for the committee. The second last paragraph on page 15 indicates that the site-specific analysis was undertaken under the state infrastructure planning system and that process concluded that there were difficulties providing a single CFC in George Town within easier walking distance, and so on it goes. So, my question is, through that

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process specifically identify there, what role did the council play in terms of that consultation? Or was the SIPS analysis specifically conducted by the department alone?

Mr FINCH - Sorry, my page 15 was different to yours. What section are you referring to there? If you give a section number - section 7, was it?

CHAIR - It's a reprint of the planning commission's documentation.

Mr FINCH - That was in the attachment to our submission.

CHAIR - It's page 15 of that planning commission document; yes, it's an attachment to yours. All that does is set out what had happened with the SIPS assessment. My question is about the involvement of the council in that assessment.

Mr FINCH - Right, okay. The SIPS process is a government process involving people in Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and DPAT. But consultation and discussion has always occurred with the George Town council. The George Town council in fact have had several motions over this journey as well about a site. At one of their meetings, which I will try and get the date of, they did discuss a number of sites and provide that information back to the department for further consideration. Some of those sites were included in what we looked at this morning - the Friend Street site was there. There was a site in Cimitiere Street and the Anne Street was amongst those sites. The council has been, I guess, square and centre to discussions about a site because of the importance of this for the community. The council have regularly been consulted about what sites might be available.

Mr BOOTH - Andrew, I would be interested if you could table the assessments that were done and the methodology that underpins your so-called community assessment of this project. Have you got documentation there that will justify what you've just said in regard to the assessment?

Mr FINCH - Yes.

Mr BOOTH - Could we have that tabled?

CHAIR - Yes, certainly. I've only got the one copy, so if I could keep it so I can refer to it and then I will table it at an appropriate time.

Mr BOOTH - I'm also interested to know about the proposed site that's sitting on a car parking area that was part of the development approval - DA - that actually required 120 car parking spaces to be provided for the hall that's being built there.

Mr CLAYTON - Obviously that was a pre-existing development application that was discussed at length at the planning commission hearing. I think it was that a plan had to be prepared for that site and that was a council decision. But it was largely irrelevant for this development because we were putting a development application in for that location.

Mr BOOTH - On an area that was required as a DA condition.

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Mr CLAYTON - It wasn't required. All that was requested as part of that original DA, which I wasn't a part of, was for a plan to be prepared. That was what we were told through the planning commission.

Mr BOOTH - You're saying then that the fact that a plan had been required to be prepared for 120 car parking spaces for the development that sits next to the one you're proposing is irrelevant to your proposal. Did you consider where those 120 cars were going to park, then?

Mr CLAYTON - The car park had never been constructed and never been used; it was a gravel area. As part of our planning process, we engaged a traffic engineer to undertake a traffic impact assessment, and as part of that process they took into account our development, the existing use, the memorial hall and the extension, but they also looked at the main street of George Town as well, and it showed that there was capacity in the car parking that was being provided to cover that.

Mr BOOTH - How many car parks were you required to provide for this development?

Mr CLAYTON - Basically the car parking that has been identified on the plans is the car parking that met that requirement.

Mr BOOTH - How many specific car parks have you provided for this development?

Mr CLAYTON - What we have done is looked at the existing hard stand area to the north of the existing Memorial Hall; it is just a hard stand area at the moment. We have formalised that as a car park. I believe there were 30 and I don't have the exact numbers in front of me. We have reformed the southern edge of our development into a car park. The traffic impact assessment looked at the whole area and presented that back to council to show the individual requirements for all the areas and the car parking demand.

Mr BOOTH - What does 'formalising a hard stand' mean?

Mr CLAYTON - The paved area at the back has no line marking; it has no wheel stops or formal access into it other than the gravel road. We are formalising with access; we are providing two additional disabled car parking spaces, wheel stops, line marking and the like.

Mr BOOTH - Are you using other existing car parks for the car parking requirement of this building?

Mr CLAYTON - In essence, yes.

Mr BOOTH - How many car parks in your DA did you think that this building would require? How many car parks are you expecting would be required and what would the normal requirement be under normal planning considerations?

Mr CLAYTON - I don't have that knowledge. That was outlined and detailed in our traffic impact assessment.

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Mr BOOTH - Specifically for this development, how many car movements are you expecting a day?

Mr CLAYTON - I am looking at some information out of the planning report. It was saying that the proposed hub needed 90 spaces.

Mr BOOTH - 90?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes. The Memorial Hall needed 40, plus 80 during functions. That totalled to 127. I am quoting off the traffic impact report - they reduced it to 119 because it included the library relocating into the hub. It also said that there were 151 spaces nearby; so it totalled 323 in the area. The process that we did with this calculation wasn't necessarily about saying, 'This is what we need; this is how many car parks you need just for that one use'. We have looked at it as an integrated whole of the existing uses and came up through our traffic engineer with what was deemed to be an appropriate number of car parking spaces.

Mr BOOTH - The question is, how many car parking spaces would this development need? How many people are you expecting to use it? And how many cars a day?

Mr CLAYTON - I don't have that information in front of me.

Mr BOOTH - Are you telling this committee that you have a design for a project worth over \$6 million and you don't know how many cars are going to use it?

Mr CLAYTON - No. What I am saying is that it wasn't simply a matter of saying, 'The building is x ; we need x amount of car parking spaces'. The process that we have gone through, which is the performance criteria of providing a detailed analysis on what the uses were going to be -

Mr BOOTH - That's what I want to know. What was the car use requirement for this specific development?

Mr CLAYTON - According to Mr Eaton's report, he had 90 spaces.

Mr BOOTH - You anticipate 90 cars will be using that centre?

Mr CLAYTON - That's what I am reading in front of me, yes.

Mr BOOTH - The CFC?

Mr CLAYTON - No, the hub.

Mr BOOTH - In your view, if 90 are going to use that, you have wiped out a car parking area to build it on that had 120 as a requirement of a previous DA?

Mr CLAYTON - But that has never been constructed and never been used.

Mr BOOTH - Are you saying that no cars ever park there now?

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Mr CLAYTON - I'm not saying that at all. It is a gravel area and the land was allocated for this development from council.

Mr BOOTH - No. The area of gravel that you are talking about was part of the requirement under a DA for a previous development for 120 car parking spaces. You have now designed a building to sit on it and I am trying to get to the bottom of where those cars are going to park. The 120 were required for the sports centre, if you could call it that, and previously there was also a requirement for the hall. You have now identified another 90 that you say will be using the CFC.

Mr CLAYTON - As I stated, I wasn't involved in the original development application for the hall extension. My understanding was that the requirement was to provide a plan that satisfied the planning scheme at the time. It is the table in most planning schemes that says you need x amount of car parks per square metre of area. What we have done under this process is to use performance criteria where we have looked at the multiple uses and the demand and come up through our traffic impact assessment to ascertain the appropriate level of car parking. In this report, whilst it might have said 'originally needs to be 120', it is only 40 on a day-to-day basis and the need up to 120 is during functions. Now the functions obviously don't occur every day; they may not occur whilst the hub is in operation - it could be after hours. So our traffic impact assessment weighs up all these scenarios and looks at the uses. It might be that under this integrated approach that we are trying to do with this building, we are looking at instead of actually multiple stops - you can park once and do multiple trips in this location which is one of the main reasons drivers use this location.

Mr BOOTH - How many car movements do you expect as a result just the CFC? How many parkings are going to use the CFC - not the hub - just for the CFC parking?

Mr CLAYTON - We have never looked at it as an individual breakdown; we have looked at the hub as a whole unit. But in other child and family centres, we have generally allowed 12 car parking spaces.

Mr BOOTH - So it is 12 car parking spaces for that; but how many for the library and the access centre?

Mr CLAYTON - As part of the traffic impact assessment it was broken down but as a total it needed 90 as area and use.

Mr BOOTH - With respect, Heath, you must have provided information to the traffic engineer. He is not a planner who just invents how many cars are going to fit into a particular area. They work on the numbers that you give them as the designer, surely?

Mr CLAYTON - No, that is not how it occurs.

Mr BOOTH - Well, have you got the methodology that he based how many car movements there are going to be on there?

Mr CLAYTON - He uses the guidelines out of New South Wales which is the respected standard for how it is done and it is a fairly common method of calculating car

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movements. I am not a traffic engineer and I am not an expert in traffic; that is why we engage specialists to -

Mr BOOTH - Someone from New South Wales?

Mr CLAYTON - No, he is a local consultant.

Mr BOOTH - Is anybody from the government today representing this development able to tell me how many car parking spaces are required for those individual uses on the site? You can't transpose figures from a similar development in New South Wales; you have to look at the demographic that you are dealing with. In George Town we have just been up to what would certainly not be an extravagant CFC by any means but there would have been a maximum of 10 cars with the amount of people, possibly five.

Mr FINCH - But I think, importantly, as Heath has alluded, each planning scheme outlines the required requirements in terms of car parking. We have been able to meet those requirements and that has been well tested through the Tasmanian Planning Commission's detailed analysis of the project.

Mr BOOTH - So you have no analysis of the number of cars that will use this site - is that what you are saying?

Mr FINCH - We know that in similar locations there are probably about a dozen car parks provided at other similar hub-type services. Here there would be more.

Mr BOOTH - So just it's just the one-size-fits-all? If you built a CFC in a gibber desert you would have the same demand for carparking as if you built one in the middle of Launceston - is that right?

Mr FINCH - We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the local planning scheme because that is what is required to be demonstrated.

Mr BOOTH - But how could you demonstrate it if you don't know how many you need?

Mr FINCH - We know what is available because of the parking in the area and we have been able to demonstrate that we meet the requirements. We wouldn't have been given a planning permit if we didn't meet the planning requirements because that is a fundamental part of the planning arrangements. We have been through some fairly detailed processes around the planning aspects of this project.

Mr BOOTH - So the best evidence you can give is that the CFC part of that development will require 12 carparking spaces?

Mr FINCH - No, I'm talking about a hub.

Mr BOOTH - So you think the entire hub will only need 12 carparking places?

Mr FINCH - We are talking about hubs. What I can say is -

Mr BOOTH - How many does a hub need, then?

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Mr CLAYTON - 90.

Mr FINCH - Yes, we've already answered that.

Mr BOOTH - Okay. Going back to the CFC component of it, how many parking spaces do you expect that will take up at any one time?

Mr FINCH - We don't have it broken down. Our whole development is about a joined-up hub facility.

Mr BOOTH - Can you give us an estimate? Somebody designed a fairly large public building there with over \$6 million of public money attached to the whole development, so you must have some idea how many people are going to use the CFC.

Mr CLAYTON - Cheryl has probably been involved with much more child and family centres around the state but the functional brief that comes out with the child and family centre indicates 12, subject to local planning conditions.

Ms WHITE - My question is to the deputy secretary. When we are speaking about car spaces for a hub and child and family centre, isn't it true that the purpose of providing this service in the centre of town is to improve accessibility to the service and, indeed, the primary concept behind developing CFCs is to enable families within walking distance to access a child and family centre? Therefore whilst you are arguing about carparking spaces, isn't it true that what we are trying to provide for here is a centrally-located service that people can access from their homes without necessarily having to drive? I would like you to elaborate on the government's policy and the reason we are trying to develop child and family centres in central locations and that entire policy collocating and integrating services and the policy behind developing a hub.

Mr FINCH - As I mentioned in the introduction, the major principles are the proximity of this facility to shops and other services such as banks, supermarkets and cafes, so that we can attract clients while they are performing other business within the town. We also want easy pedestrian access from either public transport points or shops. I think when we did the SIPS analysis it showed that a proportion of the community does not have a vehicle, so there will be other forms of access to this building importantly other than driving and that is why we need the site in a very central location. Importantly, I think we have demonstrated that there is sufficient parking available but we are also catering for easy pedestrian access and accessibility.

Ms WHITE - Can you elaborate on why the government is collocating services and the point of having a hub as opposed to stand-alone child and family centres?

Mr FINCH - A hub enables us to provide important joined-up facilities and services for the community so we can provide complementary services and capture clients who need to access government services upon point of entry for any form of services. Clients visiting the building for one service are exposed to a range of opportunities that might be about literacy support or adult learning or services vital to the health and development of children. We can provide those services under the one roof, share facilities and provide better coverage of staff across a range of services in a better way for the community.

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Mr BROOKS - I want to continue on the carpark discussion and gauge what level of input you received or considerations you had towards the impact on the business sector by changing the carparking available. Obviously there has been a change in the carparks and we're still working through what that means, but also we've perceived an intended increased visitation to that area that will further reduce the carparks available for those working in the CBD or people visiting there specifically.

Mr CLAYTON -That's one of the reasons we went with the traffic impact assessment that looked at the whole site, not just this site as a stand-alone silo as such. Mr Eaton's report looked into the full traffic movements around that and took that into consideration. The whole concept of this hub is that when you're coming in to the CBD you're doing multiple activities, you're not just coming in, doing one thing, going and then coming back in at another time, so this is an integrated approach, and right down to the traffic impact assessment we had prepared as part of our planning submission, that was taken into account. I think 130 spaces are proposed which will include the existing carparking spaces and the newly formed ones at the northern end, plus there's a further 150 parking spaces in and around the shopping centre areas, and that was deemed to be appropriate to the nature of the development and the other aspects going on.

Mr BROOKS - Certainly the representations made to me directly and via some correspondence to the committee is that would be insufficient if not immediately, then not too far into the future, and therefore may require further development of Regent Square for carparking. Have you considered that?

Mr CLAYTON -We can't consider further development; that would be a council decision and they'd have to go through the whole planning process as well. All that we considered when our traffic engineer was engaged was to look at our site, the associated areas and what the impact would be. We submitted that report as part of our planning application. Mr Eaton gave extensive evidence at the planning commission. The planning commission derived that his methodology and evidence was sufficient and met the needs of this centre and the greater area.

Mr BROOKS - So are you satisfied that will meet demand?

Mr CLAYTON - As I said, I'm not a traffic engineer, but my experience coming to George Town both professionally and privately is that you can generally find a carparking space.

CHAIR - I might, as part of the process, draw members' attention to the deliberations of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. They've addressed those issues, set out specifically on page 27 of the document which we have. Those assessments have been made, as Heath has indicated, and I'm not here to defend the people in front of us, but they are matters of fact and have been addressed as complying with the planning requirements as assessed by the Planning Commission. That assessment has been done, so we'll go to that matter of walking distances, please.

Mr BOOTH - You mentioned that the selection criteria for the site were based around the maximum number of people having access to it within walking distance of services in the centre of town. Have you got some evidence of that, or is that just something that was plucked out of the air?

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Mr FINCH - They are our criteria for when we design something.

Mr BOOTH - How did you assess whether in fact this site met those criteria?

Mr FINCH - Because it's right in the centre of the city. It has a range of transport and access options, and it was part of the earlier SIPS process that we undertook.

Mr BOOTH - Have you got documentation to provide the committee of that assessment?

Mr FINCH - We can provide that, yes.

Mr BOOTH - I'm particularly interested because your panel made a comment with regard to pram-walking distance. What is pram-walking distance?

Mr FINCH - It's the same as any walking distance. Are you referring to when we are on the site for this?

Mr BOOTH - Justification for building it in that site was it was a central location that provided easy pram-walking distance for the majority of people who might use it. What is pram-walking distance?

Mr FINCH - I guess in terms of distance it's the same, but what we've got to think of is that obviously people have to push a pram.

Mr BOOTH - How far is that?

Mr FINCH - I guess what we're trying to do is limit the distances as much as possible, and again, make sure that the service is provided as close as possible to other services and other transport options.

Mr BOOTH - So how far would a reasonable pram-walking distance be, in your view?

Mr FINCH - As little as possible.

Mr BOOTH - Which means?

Mr FINCH - Well, again, we don't -

Mr BOOTH - Like 50 feet?

Mr FINCH - Again, we don't really have a standard.

Mr BOOTH - So you've got no idea?

Mr FINCH - But we try to limit it as possible - I'm not saying we don't have any idea, but we don't have a standard for it. But I think if we were talking about the difference between virtually 50 metres or 400 metres, the distinct clear preference would be for the 50 metres.

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Mr BOOTH - So this \$6 million-plus building is sited within pram-walking distance for the majority of clients. How many people who would use the CFC live within 50 metres of the proposed development?

Mr FINCH - We don't have those figures at hand, but we know that -

Mr BOOTH - If you haven't got them at hand, can you table them?

Mr FINCH - We haven't got them, we haven't got that sort of number - I guess with the figures we haven't gone to that level of detail.

Mr BOOTH - Where do the majority of the families live who would use this facility?

Mr FINCH - They live right around the whole suburb, the whole town.

Mr BOOTH - Not in easy pram-walking distance.

Mr FINCH - They live around the whole town.

Mr BOOTH - Is that in easy pram-walking distance or are they going to have to drive a car?

Mr FINCH - Some will drive a car and park, and then do a range of transactions whilst they've parked their car within that main CBD area. Others will catch a bus and -

Mr BOOTH - Can you table the bus schedule for this area, Andrew?

Mr FINCH - No.

Mr BOOTH - Well, it's important. You've just said that you can catch a bus; what bus?

Mr FINCH - There's a community car facility available.

Mr BOOTH - They'll take community car. That's not a bus, is it?

Mr FINCH - A similar form of community transport.

Mr BOOTH - What's the availability of the community car and how many do you have? You are talking about 12 car parking spaces being needed here and that's just for the ones who drive and not the ones who push prams. How many community cars are there available to take people to the site?

Mr FINCH - We have one.

Mr BOOTH - Is that available for taking children to something like this?

Ms LARCOMBE - The child and family centre vehicle will offer transport and does already.

Mr BOOTH - It already offers that service from up here?

Ms LARCOMBE - It does.

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Mr BOOTH - Where do the majority of the younger - predominantly it's younger families and, anecdotally, I understand that this is probably the most extreme point away from where most of the young families in George Town live. Would that be your understanding?

Mr FINCH - No. We did the SIPS analysis and that looked at where people live, but they live all over the town.

Mr BOOTH - But where is the highest density of people who would use this centre, where do they live?

Mr FINCH - - The other thing is, the important concept of the hub is -

Mr BOOTH - Could you just answer the question first?

Ms LARCOMBE - The information that I have George Town is that the families with young children are spread fairly widely around the community, and also that some families live in outlying areas. We have those figures and we have the number of children in that age range. It seems that while some will be able to pram-walk, many families will have to be transported or use a vehicle to get the child and family centre.

Mr BOOTH - The figures you have there, they provide a breakdown, like a zonal breakdown, do they?

Ms LARCOMBE - The SIPS data does provide a zonal breakdown but because the SIPS data was done at the beginning of the project and that would have been in 2008-09, that wouldn't be absolutely current but it would give some idea of the location of where families who have children in that age range, live.

Mr BOOTH - Is it fair to say that the majority of the families identified would live closer to Port Dalrymple School, that end of town, rather than here?

Ms LARCOMBE - Some of them do live closer to Port Dalrymple School.

Mr BOOTH - But a greater majority of them?

Ms LARCOMBE - I'm not sure about the majority but some do. But, for a number of reasons which Andrew has already alluded to, Port Dalrymple was not seen as the preferred option by the families with children in this age group or the community at large.

Mr HALL - Quite a few of the questions I had have already been answered. I particularly had an interest in the issues and problems with the alternative sites, and you have given a bit of a snapshot of some of those. There is a common theme that I've seen through some of the representations here. I do acknowledge the government's position with regard to centralisation of services, but this is a problem we have many regional towns and centres and I come from one. There is one sentence here which encapsulates some of this:

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This development's sole purpose is to duplicate services already running in George Town. The building that is to be erected on Regent Square is simply shuffling offices and people around. It is very clear to the rate payers of George Town that the current building offices will be left empty and will erode.

To me, that could well be an issue and I wonder whether the department have been cognisant of the fact that it may well leave vacant buildings by going ahead with this development which will be deleterious to the town in itself when in fact you have some of those services already there.

Ms RAYNER - I can't answer the question about what might happen to any spaces if services moved. But I would like to make the point very strongly that you would have seen on your visit to the library that the spaces that it has are inadequate for the services that we now wish to provide for the community, in particular with regard to adult literacy support. There are no confidential spaces in which clients can meet with tutors. There are no rooms available for small group activities for adult learning programs. Therefore, I believe that for those services to flourish it will be essential for the library to relocate into this new development.

Mr HALL - As the chair mentioned in his opening remarks, as a committee we can either accept or reject the project. So the question once again is, given that we have these alternative facilities already available, could the public moneys be better spent in refurbishing some of those existing facilities rather than going down the pathway that we are looking at the moment?

Ms RAYNER - In terms of the area that the library currently operates in, we don't own that building. This proposal was put forward some time ago and nobody had any views on how the existing spaces in the Memorial Hall could be remodelled to provide the kind of services that we want. I guess it is for the council, as owners of the building, to provide advice on that issue, but it would require quite substantial changes.

Mr BROOKS - We have already acknowledged that this is a somewhat divided community on what is best for the town. There have been certain representations made to me that maybe bureaucracy has driven this project rather than the government. I just wanted to see whether the Minister for Education has been involved in this project or given any direction. Have you had any direction from the minister and does he support this?

Mr FINCH - The Premier takes on the responsibility for the hubs and the Premier does have a hub committee. It is called the Community Services Hubs Board; it reports to the Premier on this because it is a hub.

Mr BROOKS - There is no representative, though, of DPAC here at the table that I am aware of but there are members of the Education department.

Mr FINCH - Yes.

Mr BROOKS - And the library comes under the Minister for Education, I believe?

Mr FINCH - Yes, that is correct.

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Mr BROOKS - My question is about the Minister for Education. What is his position on it?

Mr FINCH - The minister himself would answer that question but obviously he has been supportive of the development in terms of having a new link for the town as part of the hub.

Mr BROOKS - Have you discussed it directly with the minister?

Mr FINCH - Yes.

Mr BROOKS - And he has been supportive of this?

Mr FINCH - Yes, he is supportive of it.

Mr BROOKS - Did you have a discussion about other locations or splitting the hub and putting it into some school, as has been suggested?

Mr FINCH - We have had discussions around sites, as I mentioned before, over the last three to four years given that there might have been some risk associated with the prime site that is considered the number one priority. It is natural for people to do that. Importantly, this site, for all the reasons that we have already talked about in terms of its proximity to services and accessibility, is the prime site. As we have already said, we do want to establish a hub. We don't want to have a stand-alone CFC and a stand-alone LINC because that will not let us deliver the key policy objectives about bringing services together under one roof and providing complementary joined-up services for the community. There are many benefits in that integrated approach and I have mentioned some of them - even our staff having a multi-skilled workforce that can work across all clients that come in and improve customer experiences. There are more opportunities for engagement and more efficient use of resources, capturing people that fall through the gaps. Our staff are trained so that when someone comes in with one enquiry, we might observe that they have some literacy problems; we can quickly refer them for literacy assistance. We would lose all of those benefits if we have stand-alone services.

Mr BROOKS - So you had a discussion with Minister McKim about that?

Mr FINCH - We have provided information about various sites and issues with sites. We have done significant work following on from what the community did around site identification. We have done work with the council around sites. The secretary of the department and myself came to the council early last year for the purpose of discussing and considering other sites. Following the donation, we looked at a bit of detailed consultant-based analysis of the Anne Street site and took it out to our stakeholders. But again, the prime site of Regent Square remains the site considered the best one to deliver these joined-up integrated services for the George Town community.

Mr BROOKS - And Minister McKim, as the Minister for Education, supports the project as proposed?

Mr FINCH - Yes.

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Ms WHITE - I have a question for you, Cheryl. We had the pleasure of visiting the fire station playgroup - is that how it is referred to?

Ms LARCOMBE - It is called the Fire Station School.

Ms WHITE - It was great to see the number of children there and the parents too. I understand the demand for that program has grown from one day a fortnight to two full days a week now. That highlights to me the requirement for a specialised child and family centre where you can deliver services in a better location. It struck me that the little hall is really inadequate. I did not see any toilets there and it is very tiny. So I was just hoping that you might be able to talk about this from the perspective of the child. Ultimately, we are here talking about a hub that incorporates a child and family centre and I have not had anyone really speak about what children in George Town need today. Certainly, we are talking about providing a service where parents can go and access a range of services. But from the child's perspective, I was hoping you might be able to talk about the types of children you see using the services already offered in that early learning bracket here in George Town, and what the future might look like if we had a child and family centre.

Ms LARCOMBE - Thank you very much, Rebecca. I suppose the opportunity was just right this morning because fire station school was on and it happens in that little place every Tuesday and Thursday. I feel quite embarrassed that we have had to resort to that sort of facility for some of the children in this community who have, we might say, the highest need. Even just talking about it makes me feel really uncomfortable that we have this inequity here in George Town in that provision. When I see the other 11 communities where we have been able to develop child and family centres in the last three or four years, the difference in the provision of what is available for the child and the family is significant. Our child and family centres are purpose-built facilities focused on what we know as best early learning, and health and well-being provision for children. They are very much child-focused and account for the child having the opportunity to be in the centre with their parents. So, it is very much a family-centred approach to what might be available for children. I see it as very much available for all children in the community. The group we saw this morning were special children, if you like, with what we would call developmental or special needs, but really a child and family centre is available for all children and their families as a place to provide the best quality early learning environments as well as really easy access to health services such as the child health nurse.

In many of our child and family centres now we also have antenatal, midwifery and other services around other sorts of playgroups and therapeutic services. We are seeing high usage of those centres by families, increased use across the short time those centres have been open. The focus on working with the child is foremost in our thinking and what's best for the child within the family, and that idea of working really closely in partnership with families. We are moving away from what we've been traditionally seen as 'doing' to the family, if you like, as compared now to working with the family around what they see as their needs and how they can best be met within that integrated service delivery model.

Ms WHITE - I have visited many of the other child and family centres that are already in operation in Tasmania and seen the high volume of parents who use those facilities. For

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example, at St Helens they can have up to 100 parents go through that facility every day - it's extraordinary - and the level of care provided to those children is just beautiful to see. I would much prefer to see children in George Town in a purpose-built facility as opposed to the place they're currently using. I'm certainly not doubting the level of care provided, or the intent and reason they're there, but it's inadequate in my view.

Mr BOOTH - I'd echo that. It's blindingly obvious that the current facility is inadequate, but it doesn't mean it has to be built on Regent Square or as part of a multifunction polis; that's the point. I don't think anybody has given evidence to me or made any submissions that we don't need a child and family centre in George Town or that the community wouldn't welcome it in an appropriate place.

I'd like to go back to the question Mr Brooks asked a moment ago with regard to the Minister for Education supporting this project. Do you have documentation or letters from him or some form of active support of this project?

Mr FINCH - It's probably not appropriate for me to comment much further about that. It's best to put those questions separately to the minister.

Mr BOOTH - He's not here, but you are.

Mr FINCH - That's correct. We've kept him informed of all aspects of this project as the project's unfolded over its journey in terms of the planning processes, site issues and what we're trying to do.

Mr BOOTH - Has he provided support for the project to be built on Regent Square?

Mr FINCH - He supports the project.

Mr BOOTH - On Regent Square? The proposed project?

Mr FINCH - Well, he hasn't opposed it. I don't think it's appropriate for me to speak on behalf of a minister of the crown.

Mr BOOTH - I'm asking you if the minister has supported the project to be built on Regent Square, and if so, when?

Mr FINCH - Again, I can't say whether he's publicly provided support on it. It's not appropriate for me to speak on his behalf.

Mr BOOTH - I think it is. With respect, you're here to answer questions from the committee and I'm asking you a question. Has the minister supported the project and, if so, how?

Mr FINCH - As I alluded to before, there are a number of ministers involved in this. Minister Michelle O'Byrne is involved because she has responsibility for child and family centres within the state, and the department reports to her for that aspect of the portfolio. The Premier is involved because of the important nature of the hub concept and the Premier took on that responsibility. But, yes, the Minister for Education is responsible for the LINC.

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Mr BOOTH - And is supportive of the LINC.

Mr FINCH - Definitely.

Mr BOOTH - Can you table, or email us the letters to that effect, detailing the support?

Mr FINCH - I don't have that available.

Mr BOOTH - Chair, I'm not sure whether we might need to adjourn to discuss what view the committee might have on this witness not providing the information I'm seeking.

CHAIR - It's not a matter of not providing it; we can call for Andrew, as we have with other evidence alluded to, for it to be tabled at a later time. We can take that into consideration. We can specifically ask the department - and you've gone down that path, Kim, so it's appropriate - to provide the documentation to confirm what Andrew is saying.

Mr BOOTH - I would seek for that to occur.

CHAIR - So that's clear, we are asking for that and we will confirm that in writing. In addition to that, if the committee is of a mind, we can invite the minister to appear and give his version of the process as well, so we will get that information from you.

Mr FINCH - Yes. As I've mentioned before though, the important point here is that within the portfolio responsibilities of government and how they're allocated, there has been agreement on responsibility around the hub and who makes decisions about that.

Mr BOOTH - Who is responsible for it?

Mr FINCH - For the hub it's the Premier.

Mr BOOTH - The hub in its entirety?

Mr FINCH - Yes.

Mr BOOTH - And Minister O'Byrne?

Mr FINCH - Minister O'Byrne has responsibility around child and family services and the Minister for Education has responsibility for the LINC's, but when we're joining up in this cross-portfolio approach, the Premier takes responsibility and it is she who has ultimately introduced the hub policy and supports the development of the hub on this site.

CHAIR - I think the committee will be writing to you to confirm some of those matters that we want further information on, and that may embrace other ministers than just the Premier because of your evidence to us that in fact they are involved and have been kept in the loop, et cetera. We will get that confirmed in writing.

Mr BROOKS - I would like to also have a chat about the design of it, given it's a significant amount of public money that we would be spending. I wonder if you could take us

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briefly through the consultation you went through, the layout and effectively the general design of the building and why you have done it like that.

Mr CLAYTON - Artas was originally engaged by the Department of Education to design the hub as a concept. When we started the process there was a detailed functional brief on a child and family centre and the hub concept was still new so there was a series of meetings with DPAC and other department heads around how this concept would evolve. The building itself is largely driven by the functional requirements of the briefs. The overarching intention of the hub is to provide an integrated service to the community by providing shared resources for staff to allow them, rather than working in isolation on various things, to come together in a shared area - as was alluded to by Jenny and Andrew - to pick up other things that might normally fall between the cracks. The design itself largely relates to the functional brief in the floor plan layout and the sizes and things like that. As I touched on in my opening statement, the building form and scale is largely derived from its location, its adjacency to the existing Memorial Hall and the extension, and also to Regent Square.

Particularly and deliberately the aim with the design is to keep a corporate end, which is the front end that faces the car park to the south. This is a little bit more corporate in its appearance, but as we work our way around Elizabeth Street the forms become much more playful, much softer, with a curved roof; even the materials are moving into more natural timber and plywood, use of colour and the like. We are looking to get as much natural light in through those child and family centres as we can. Then there is the extensive play area which we found to be fundamental in the child and family centres.

Mr BROOKS - When you design a building like this, do you take into consideration the budgetary restraints or the best value for money or is it just, as an architect, a free for all and you make it look how you think it should look and don't worry about the costs?

Mr CLAYTON - There are very few jobs you get to do that. It's just a reality that that doesn't happen. Basically we were given a brief and it was functionally driven about the areas, and when you have certain areas and certain buildings, they cost that amount of money to build that amount of floor area. At every stage through this process we have had the costings as part of our team. Our quantity surveyors have been integral as part of that process so we've been working within the budget that was given to us and the plans that are before you are the ones that meet that budget.

Mr BROOKS - When you are designing a building and you are looking at the need, do you take into account opportunities to reduce the construction cost and keep it as low as possible even though you may have the budgetary scope to make it a little more expensive?

Mr CLAYTON - The responsible way in any design is to be sympathetic to where you are. My personal belief is that you don't add the frilly bits for the sake of the frilly bits. It's a matter of meeting demand. Once this thing is built and we walk away, there are a series of users who have to use this after I've gone away, so it needs to be a usable building. The systems and the materials and everything that we have put into this have been developed over many years of what we know works in schools and public buildings, and there can be a slightly elevated cost to some of those things, but across a lifecycle they are actually a most appropriate use. So you are not coming back in five or ten years and

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having to do maintenance and things like that. It's a balance between what the costs are upfront between ongoing costs, but I think the materials and the design that we have here is appropriate here for the specific nature of this building.

Mr BROOKS - I have a couple of specific questions. I look at construction and given the state of the budget and our economic climate whether we can go to the extreme or not. I look at things like the ceiling height of this building and I'll ask you: is it more expensive to build a higher building than a lower building, or is it the same cost?

Mr CLAYTON - Obviously the higher building is more expensive but in saying that, if you are talking about the foyer spaces and things like that, it's appropriate that we create a building scale and a building mass that's appropriate for its need. I think it would be fairly inappropriate to put a 2.4-metre standard house ceiling flat across this and only have the whole building 3 metres high. It would look out of context in what we are doing.

Mr BROOKS - How high is this building. How high is the exterior and what's the design of the interior ceiling?

Mr CLAYTON - The highest point of the new hub is 6.5 metres, which is the foyer, which is less than the existing Memorial Hall, I think that's just under 8 metres.

Mr BROOKS - So why would we need a 6.5-metre building other than to look good?

Mr CLAYTON - Basically in creating that public foyer space, which is where you come into the entrance, the ceiling height I think ranges between 4 metres and 5 metres, which is not dissimilar to this room. So when you are talking about potentially having a large number of people in there, you would get a fairly claustrophobic feeling if the ceiling height was too low. We also need to accommodate building services, air conditioning and all those sorts of things which get concealed in ceiling zones, which has been considered in here. But the base of it, I think, is that the main ceiling height is around 3 metres to 3.5 metres throughout with only the public foyer areas that go up and down.

Mr BROOKS - What's the height of the interior then?

Mr CLAYTON - The highest point is 6.5 metres.

Mr BROOKS - Where you referred to that the interior is around 3.5 metres or 3 metres in height, what's the exterior height of that section?

Mr CLAYTON - It drops down to about 5.2 metres.

Mr BROOKS - It's still a high building.

Mr CLAYTON - It's 4.7 metres.

Mr BROOKS - Obviously the construction cost of that is more than if you built it at maybe 4 metres or 4.2 metres or something like that.

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Mr CLAYTON - You are talking marginal when you are talking about that. You still have your standard sheet sizes and things that you have to work to; sometimes it can cost you more to cut things down.

Mr BROOKS - On that, one thing that I noticed and I did mention it to you when we were looking at the site was, if you look at the design of - I presume it would be the northern face - there are a lot of corners and I counted around 16 to 17, which you could probably cover off at two corners. In construction, normally it costs more to put corners in and what I want to ask is: why would you do that other than because it might look good later on? Is there a functional requirement to have 17 corners on one wall, on one face?

Mr CLAYTON - I'm not sure I get to 17 but -

Mr BROOKS - Sixteen.

Mr CLAYTON - Okay. The northern face is predominantly the area for the child and family centre and what we are looking at doing is creating interesting spaces for the kids to be able to use and interact. The section of the building that we were talking about on site is one of the child zone areas that pushes forward and then the rest of the building steps back towards the Memorial Hall. That area that pushes back does still have a covered way over there so the roof line is basically in a straight, rectangular form even though it is curving. It's the building line underneath it that is pushing backwards and forwards. Yes, there are some cosmetic elements to that but it is also functional in the fact we have the toilets that we are pushing forward, the child access toilets. The reason they are pushed forward is that they need to be accessible both internally and externally so we are not having kids running backwards and forwards through the building if they are in the outdoor play areas.

We are also looking at creating interesting spaces - window seats and things like that. One of the key components of the brief is to create a relaxing atmosphere so that the parents can come and sit and feel comfortable, so we are creating interesting spaces for them to sit.

Mr BROOKS - I still fail to see why you need so many, given obviously tight budgetary constraints and this costs the taxpayer money - for a \$6 million project, are we getting everything we need and does it give us complete value for money?

Mr CLAYTON - As I said, the roof line is rectangular in shape. The infill walls under there are the bits that step in and out. So, yes you have a little bit more cutting and a little more shutting but in this context I don't believe that it has a significant impact on the budget.

Mr BROOKS - Architectural fees of \$540 000 - is that standard?

Mr CLAYTON - Those fees are for all the consultants for the whole project.

Mr BROOKS - It says, 'design documentation and contract administration, architectural fees'.

Mr CLAYTON - Yes.

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Mr BROOKS - How many times has the plan changed architecturally?

Mr CLAYTON - It has changed a few times. That is the natural process of working through any form of design. Our fee submission in all our government work is a standing process that we go through.

Mr BROOKS - One of my continued struggles is that item of art for a public scheme of \$80 000?

Mr CLAYTON - It is out of my hands.

Mr BROOKS - I just put this on the public record at every Public Works Committee hearing. I think we could do better with less and certainly within more local talented artists rather than continuing to put that significant amount of money in every building, including a car park in Burnie for which we spent \$80 000 on art.

CHAIR - Which is not relevant to this project.

Mr BROOKS - No, but I was just making a point around the cost. Given the budget for the building works of \$5 million and then the additional amounts in architect fees, art and so on, it brings it in at \$6.9 million, including a contingency. Does that deliver value for money for the Tasmanian taxpayer? Will it give the community what it needs for that money, in your opinion?

Mr CLAYTON - As the architect and the project manager, I think that for the size and the scope of the work that we are undertaking, the construction is a fair and reasonable value for what the result will be at the end of the day. What will it deliver for the community? The building is only small component of what that is; it is these people who are going to deliver the service. The building is the building; it is the service that will finally affect any output.

Mr BROOKS - On the contract side of it, obviously it would be beneficial to the community to use local contractors and buy local where possible. What process will you follow to try to ensure that happens?

Mr FINCH - We will follow the existing Treasury instructions around procurement. There have been some recent changes to that following the -

Mr BROOKS - The font change.

Mr FINCH - No, but there is a new central procurement board that consists of members of industry. I think the Master Builders is represented there, and John Pitt from Pitt & Sherry is a member of the board. So any procurement for building construction over \$4 million, we will need to demonstrate for that committee how we are engaging local contractors. We have a long record of clear procurement processes that anyone can apply and tender for. The object is for us to be competitive and get the best price and value for money. That is what we will be looking for in the procurement process and as part of that assessment, we will be seeking to ensure that local contractors are engaged.

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Mr BROOKS - Will that go out as one tender or will it go out as multiple tenders? Will it be disaggregated or will it be a single tender?

Mr FINCH - What we do in managing these projects is aim to appoint a head contractor. Based on past experience, that is a local contractor for these jobs within Tasmania. Then that local contractor takes on the management of all the sub-contracts as required as part of delivering that project.

Mr BROOKS - How many local contractors around George Town would be qualified for a \$5 million pre-approval for government tenders and contracts?

Mr FINCH - I haven't analysed that, to be honest.

Mr BROOKS - I could probably guess.

Mr FINCH - I could probably guess also, but I haven't analysed that. Again, we'll be aiming to appoint a contractor who can perform the job and engage the maximum number of local contractors as possible.

Mr BROOKS - Do you know how many are pre-qualified at that level within the Department of Education?

Mr FINCH - It's not a Department of Education pre-qualification; it's a whole-of-government issue managed by the Department of Treasury and Finance. From memory, for contracts in excess of \$5 million, there are around 12 to 15 contractors. Again, that's from my memory and I haven't looked at the actual figures for some time.

Mr BROOKS - And none of them that you can remember are from George Town?

Mr FINCH - Probably not with a registered mailbox in George Town, but the majority of those are local Tasmanian contractors.

Mr BROOKS - They could be multinationals with a PO box in Hobart. Would that count as local?

Mr FINCH - No; the vast majority are Tasmanian contractors. There would be people engaged from within the town, I'd imagine, on a sub-contract basis.

Mr BROOKS - But to qualify as a local contractor, you only need a PO box in the state; it's not that hard.

Mr FINCH - No, but all I could do is to point you to the procurement website to see the outcomes of tender processes over a long period of time. You will see that generally Tasmanian contractors are enlisted to perform these works. It is important to state there are important reasons for this pre-qualification. It is because we need to ensure, in spending this important allocation of public money, that it is spent appropriately and a contractor that is engaged has the capacity to deliver the project and meet all the safety requirements associated with it.

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Mr BROOKS - Have you seen in any Department of Education project - and it could be the case on this one - where multinationals have come in and under-bid on contracts? They then put the squeeze on the local sub-contractors to cut their prices and make it nearly unsustainable. This leads to shortcuts and ends up with a bad outcome. But at least you've got the big multinational ticking the box that got the prime contract. What are you going to put in place to make sure that doesn't happen on this occasion?

Mr FINCH - The answer to your first question is no; I haven't seen it.

Mr BROOKS - I can give you some examples, if you haven't.

Mr FINCH - No, you've asked me about the Department of Education -

Mr BROOKS - I can give you some of those too.

Mr FINCH - A good example would be the fairly recent Commonwealth nation-building program where some 400 projects were undertaken. I think there was one project that was undertaken by a non-Tasmanian contractor. If you have a look at the percentage there, it's insignificant - one out of about 400 projects. We will apply our usual procurement criteria and analysis, and we'll be looking for value for money and high engagement of local contractors.

Mr BROOKS - So what will you put in place to make sure the local contractors get a fair share if they're not the prime contractor? It's fairly evident it won't be a local George Town builder being the prime contractor, but they may be able to support. How do you encourage and make sure they get their fair share and help to sustain the community, but also make sure they're not getting ripped off or done over by the bigger contractor, which happens on a fairly regular basis?

Mr FINCH - That will be part of the evaluation criteria that form the tender process. We will be asking each contractor to demonstrate how they'll be implementing that and that will be part of our value-for-money assessment.

Mr BROOKS - Do you have any way of managing it during the contract process, once it's been awarded, during the execution of it?

Mr FINCH - Yes, we do, and that's part of the reason we have the fees you referred to before, because Heath becomes the superintendent of the project.

Mr BROOKS - So it's his fault.

Mr CLAYTON - It's a joint effort between the Department of Education's project officer and me. You touched on cutting corners before. Whilst we can't control the multinational thing because that's out of our hands and it's controlled by Treasury and Finance, my role is to ensure that the quality and what is shown on the drawings is actually what has been delivered, and we have contracts in place to ensure that happens.

Mr BROOKS - But you also know that in construction it quite often happens that the smaller single employee or subcontractor gets squeezed on price. He or she has to feed their family so they take the price, but we all know it's unsustainable, and if it was on standard

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wages it would be against the law but given it's a subcontractor it doesn't really matter and there is no real avenue for them to complain about it because the major players say, 'If you don't like it go away and we'll get someone else in'. They're taking a fair bit of cream off the top for so-called managing and winning the tender because you haven't desegregated in the first place, which probably would have made it cheaper.

Mr BOOTH - Andrew, this follows on from your concern with regard to probity and prudent use of public funds. I must say that the staggering cost of this project doesn't seem to fit in with the scale, if you like, of real estate that's available in George Town at the moment for sale. Did you ever, at any stage, consider the re-use and refurbishment of an existing building that might be for sale?

Mr FINCH - Amongst the options, as we talked about before in terms of sites, we saw one this morning that had an existing building on it, but that wouldn't be virtually transferable.

Mr BOOTH - I would agree, just on a superficial look that one wouldn't have been, but I'm talking about other buildings. Opposite the hall, for example, there's an old Chickenfeed store that's empty. Is there any building in George Town that would cost more than the architect's fees for constructing this building, \$540 000?

Mr FINCH - We have to look at a site that's large enough.

Mr BOOTH - Well, have you considered any of the existing buildings that might be for sale, like the Chickenfeed site? We could discuss size and appropriateness for a CFC, for example, there. There doesn't seem to be a parking issue because that doesn't seem to be a concern of this development, given that you're using public carparking spaces already provided, so why couldn't you, for example, have looked at buying that building and putting a CFC in there?

Mr FINCH - Because the important point is that that site would not be sufficient to house this important hub building we're trying to construct.

Mr BOOTH - This with apologies to John Watts, who has provided this to the committee - and hopefully we're talking to Mr Watts later on - he has made some very interesting quotes here out of the consideration of the development of the George Town Hospital and Community Health Centre, which was built over two stages and opened with much fanfare by the now Premier, Hon. Lara Giddings, Minister for Health and Human Services, on 27 November 2007.

The main submission with regard to the redevelopment included the following - and this was information that was provided to the parliamentary works committee looking at that project and approving it. You might hear some of your own words in here:

Our aim here at George Town, as we consider this building, is to have a new and integrated one-stop facility which combines hospital services along with community health and welfare services. This notion of a one-stop facility was one of the crucial phrases when we first started talking about this back in 2000. I think it is a neat little phrase which encapsulates the idea that health and community welfare services are all in the one spot

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so everyone knows where to go ... We want to try to strengthen our health promotion and community health approach and obviously, again, this one-stop facility will give us the capacity to improve our information with the community.

What has changed between 27 November 2007, when that centre was opened, to require a new community hub to be built, a one-stop shop, for example? It seems this a repetition and almost like a cut-and-paste from the justification for that previous hospital and community centre.

Mr FINCH - This hub is providing different services because we are providing LINC. The major partners in this project are the LINC services, the Service Tasmania services and the -

Mr BOOTH - So it's about a library and access centre, not about the child and family centre?

Mr FINCH - You just interrupted me as I was saying that the important third partner to this project is the CFC.

Mr BOOTH - But those services are already provided, aren't they?

Mr FINCH - No. We don't have a CFC in the town.

Mr BOOTH - No, not under that name, but the justification for the George Town Hospital and Community Health Centre was, I would put it to you, for similar reasons. They talk about health and community welfare services all in the one spot so everyone knows where to go. What is not going to be provided at that current location that will be provided for at this new location?

Ms LARCOMBE - It sounds to me that you're talking about a health centre whereas what we are talking about within the child and family centre and the LINC is very much focused on learning and the capacity for learning across the spectrum for children, families and for other adults in the community, as well as Service Tasmania for those transactional services. We are about early childhood education, children's health and wellbeing, adult learning and family support services, and combinations of services.

Mr BOOTH - But wouldn't it be more appropriate to locate a CFC and the services they provide along with community welfare and health services for young parents, rather than segregating them and creating another centre somewhere else which is justified on the same basis to be a one-stop shop?

Ms LARCOMBE - The focus in a health centre is on a much more clinical approach to the provision of services, whereas we are looking at something that is much more available to all of the community, not a segregated or siloed focus on a deficit. We are looking at trying to focus on what's available for everybody within the CFC for all families in that age range.

Mr BOOTH - So somebody looking for community welfare services or health and community services who was at the CFC would then have to walk up the road to the hospital?

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Ms LARCOMBE - I'm not sure whether they would go there or Service Tasmania or LINC Tasmania; it depends on the type of service, I would imagine.

Mr BOOTH - I don't think Service Tasmania provides welfare and health services, does it?

Ms RAYNER - It does provide information about them.

Ms LARCOMBE - Medicare services are available through Service Tasmania.

Mr BOOTH - So you are saying there is nothing within the George Town Hospital redevelopment that would be able to provide the combined services of a CFC plus the services that justified the expenditure of \$6.1 million in 2007 when it was opened? There was no mention of a great glaring -

Mr FINCH - It might be prudent to cover off on another aspect of your question about renovating existing buildings because quite often the cost of adjusting and renovating a building to suit a purpose is as expensive as developing new construction. I think we should respond to your question on that.

Mr BOOTH - If I can get an answer to the other one first I would appreciate the response to that one.

Mr FINCH - I guess the hub concept came around following the development of the Huon LINC in 2005. We were off and running with the Huon LINC but it wasn't until 2008-09 state budget that then-Premier Bartlett announced funding for a further four regional LINC centres to be established based on the Huon LINC model. Following that we needed to undertake analysis about which communities, given that we couldn't service every community with an investment of four. We looked at the social and economic index of areas compiled by the ABS and I think under that methodology George Town was considered the second most disadvantaged area in Tasmania and therefore a high priority area to allocate one of these important four regional centres.

Mr BOOTH - That doesn't seem to be in line with the submission here which talks about the hospital redevelopment, the one that was opened on 27 November 2007, which states:

The hospital redevelopment contained all the essential services that are incorporated in the CFC and, despite claims to the contrary, those services have been available since that time.

Are you saying that in fact they have not been available since that time?

Mr FINCH - I don't think the CFC policy was really developed until around 2008-09. At that stage we commissioned someone to come in and work with us to develop design standards for CFCs and that didn't take place until around 2009. The concept of a CFC hadn't even been generated by -

Mr BOOTH - No, but surely the concept of the services provided certainly had been? Are you trying to say that this CFC will provide unique and new services that have never been provided in George Town before? Not the hub, just the CFC, because we have a

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submission here that states in black and white that those essential services incorporated in the CFC have been available since 2007 when that hospital redevelopment was opened.

Ms WHITE - That submission was from a member of the public.

Ms LARCOMBE - I suppose if that was the case I wonder about the service this morning when we went to the Fire Station School we saw an example of 40 families seeking services around the needs of their children - their learning, therapy needs, speech and language needs and other needs - in a more holistic environment, rather than some of which may be offered at the hospital in a clinical environment. It may be that you could go to the hospital for one aspect of your child's needs but it is not in the same wraparound integrated service delivery model we are talking about here and we know that those families we saw this morning aren't going to the hospital for those services. I suppose services that may be available at the hospital are not the services that families with young children are looking for in this sort of a model. We are learning so much more about the way we provide services to families that there needs to be much more in that partnership way where services are working together rather than in silos, which I imagine is the older model in place at the hospital.

Mr BOOTH - The submission goes on to say that around 2009-10 a decision was made to erect a hub in George Town and remove the CFC from the hospital precinct which was 300 metres externally from the hospital site where the hub was going to be moved to. The submission says that the CFC component was seen to fit better with the library and online centre and Service Tasmania rather than the health and hospital complex.

Ms LARCOMBE - My understanding is that the child health nurse services from the hospital will move into the child and family centre. That is a practice that is happening around the state and our hope is that we will see a greater uptake of families having their children assessed around those critical health markers because we know that the fall-off in the uptake of the health checks for children across the age range goes from something like 80 per cent in the first 12 months down to something like 36 per cent. Through a different sort of model we are confident that the uptake of the health checks for children will be much greater and we are seeing those results in the different models that are working in places like Beaconsfield, for example.

Mr BOOTH - It is interesting that you're suggesting there is a better model because this is pretty contemporary stuff. As I said, it was only opened in 2007, and exactly the same justifications that are now being made for this multifunction polis were given in terms of justifying that \$6.1 million project. I am somewhat alarmed now that the consideration of the George Town Hospital and Community Health Centre was based on evidence given to a similar committee to us here - in fact, another Public Works Committee - with exactly the same words virtually used to justify that which is now apparently redundant. What will happen to the spaces vacated over there as a result of removal of those services?

Mr FINCH - I think we are talking about very limited space. As Cheryl mentioned, it is only one child health nurse who has probably been operating out of one small room.

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Mr BOOTH - At the newly redeveloped hospital, what services will be removed from there and form part of the CFC or the hub, if it was built?

Ms LARCOMBE - My understanding is that it would be the child health nurse.

Mr BOOTH - What area does that take up in that building?

Ms LARCOMBE - I don't know.

Mr CLAYTON - It is approximately a 4x4-metre room.

Mr BOOTH - So that is the only area that will become redundant as a result of this new development?

Mr CLAYTON - I don't know. I understand that the other services in the hospital are more adult-based community services, allied health services available to the community and not necessarily for nought-to-fives.

Mr HALL - The total capex we have here is \$6.9 million, almost \$7 million, and normally when this committee receives a bunch of breakdowns the contingency cost is something like about 10 per cent but I notice in this one it is only about \$300 000, which is lower than you would normally have. Why is that the case?

Mr CLAYTON - There is a couple of factors in that, Mr Hall, one being that it is fundamentally a greenfield site so there is a lot more known because you are not working with old buildings, but there is also a line for post-occupancy costs, which is the last line, and that would sometimes be incorporated into a contingency allowance as well for things that happen after you have got things up and running. To my mind, \$300 000 is an adequate amount as a contingency for a building of this nature.

Mr HALL - So you're confident that there will not be any cost overruns in this project at all?

Mr CLAYTON - Yes, I am fairly comfortable with the budget we have been provided.

Mr BOOTH - It won't be another Hazelwood School blowout, then?

Mr CLAYTON - I don't know.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.