

Business Northwest is the peak employer body in the Burnie/Wynyard area and has over 100 members. It is the operational arm of the Burnie Chamber of Commerce and Industry which was established in 1937. Our member base includes mostly small businesses but covers a very wide range of industry sectors.

After extensive consultation with our members, I have been asked to write this submission indicating our complete lack of support for the proposed move of the Burnie courthouse to the Mooreville Road site.

The Mooreville area has been developed as an educational precinct over the last 40+ years and is surrounded primarily by residential housing and an aged care facility. It provides education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels so the insertion of a justice facility is totally incongruous with the area.

The following are some of the concerns we have:

- There is considerable concern within the community that this development is totally “out of step” with the needs and character of the area and will reduce house values.
- There will be additional legal costs to the public as lawyers will have to drive to Mooreville Road rather than walk to the current site. I am sure they will charge for that travel rather than the current situation where they merely take a 2-3 minute walk from their office.
- The current courthouse generates business for CBD cafes and restaurants as staff and users patronise local eateries on a regular basis. Moving the court out of the CBD means that revenue leaves and would probably be spent at the new site – in the past that was operated by a multinational corporation.
- The disadvantaged of our society needing to use public transport to get to the court are hit hardest as after taking a bus to Burnie they will need to take another to get to Mooreville Road and the same to get home.
- We are concerned that’s students from TAFE and Hellyer College would be sharing the bus service and potentially be subjected to abuse or bullying.

We understand that originally \$15m was pledged to renovate the existing courthouse in Alexander St. That decision in 2018 was made after extensive consultation with local government, local business and the general community back in 2017. Funds were allocated and an architect appointed in 2019.

On June 4th, 2020, the Minister advised the redevelopment would be fast tracked and then just ten weeks later on August 11th the project was abandoned and the move to Mooreville Road was announced. A year later an additional \$25m was allocated – **a \$15m project has blown out to \$40m before it has started.**

The lack of consultation for the Department of Justice in formulating this decision has been disgraceful. The first advice of the move was via our daily newspaper. No civic leaders including the mayor, legal fraternity or myself had any prior notice of this plan.

It is our belief that there was a little planning done in the area by the consultant to the department or by departmental staff themselves. There was no contact made with the main commercial real estate agent in the region or with council to investigate alternatives. It is claimed by the department that the information was made available to the former General Manager of the council. If so, it must've been in a passing manner because there is no record in the communications log of any communication between the department and the General Manager.

In this case the consultation process was zero and sadly reflects the attitude that many Hobart bureaucrats have towards the North West coast. They do not care about how the people on the coast feel and they act irresponsibly and expediently with our assets.

It would indeed be interesting to know how many of these bureaucrats travel regularly or at all to the North West coast in performing their duties.

In the recent pandemic we have observed that the border closure forced many Hobart people to come to the North West coast as they could not travel to the mainland or overseas. Indeed, many of them had not been here for 30 or 40 years and were amazed at how much the area had changed - this is typical of the attitude of people from the south of Tasmania; especially the bureaucrats.

The Burnie Primary School just 250m east of the Mooreville Road site is stretched to capacity and the planned construction of a further 70 dwellings immediately west of the current site will place added stress on the primary school. The former UTas site presents a great opportunity to expand the Burnie Primary School and maybe incorporate Cooe Primary into one location as has been done at Romaine.

Perhaps the Education Department should look more strategically at such opportunities to maximise its assets.

All we are seeking is that the Department of Justice undertake proper community consultation on the proposed courthouse relocation and agree to investigate any other suitable options that consultation will bring to the table. Aside from our other reasons for retaining the court in the CBD we believe there are alternative sites that have not been considered that need to be discussed. \$40m can easily fund a purpose-built facility of considerable size in the CBD and surely the government wants this money to be well spent and in line with community expectations.

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PRESIDENT
DECEMBER 6, 2021