



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Huon LINC – the development of a multi-
functional building on the site of the existing
Magistrates Court at Huonville

*Presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr *Harriss* (Chairman)
Mr *Hall*

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr *Best*
Mrs *Napier*
Mr *Sturges*

By Authority: Government Printer, Tasmania

INTRODUCTION

To His Excellency the Honourable William John Ellis Cox A.C., Lieutenant-Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal: -

Huon LINC – the development of a multi-functional building on the site of the existing Magistrates Court at Huonville.

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*.

BACKGROUND

The Huon LINC (Learning and Information Network Centre) project offers a new and innovative service initiative for Tasmania which reflects a philosophy of lifelong learning for a regional community.

This project seeks to integrate the services related to education, training and information, with an emphasis on clients beyond the compulsory years of schooling. The LINC Co-ordinator is seen as working with the citizens of the Huon Valley to deliver longer term planning and service programs that meet the education, training and information needs of the Valley. The Co-ordinator will be a broker of the services provided for clients locally and a conduit for access to the service options that are provided beyond the Valley through other existing education, training and information service providers both physically and virtually.

This project will model a new service paradigm for a broad range of clients that to date have been provided for through a 'piecemeal or silo' service provision. In addition to education, training and information services, there are potential synergies with Centrelink, Service Tasmania and the Business Enterprise Centre being co-located in this facility as there are potentially many clients in common. The establishment of the LINC will challenge the Department's organisational structure and may serve as a catalyst to further reform the organisation structure to take account of a multi-dimensional, client-driven service model for post year 10 delivery, particularly in rural communities.

The LINC will comprise a core building and technical infrastructure site in Huonville, with connections, via information and communications technology, to a range of satellite centres in the Huon Valley. The LINC will act as a focal point for meeting regional needs for:

- education and training services (including Huonville High VET in Schools);
- information services;

- business development services; and
- community services.

Vocational Education and Training Demands

VET enrolments in the Huon Valley have increased almost 64%, from 884 enrolments in 2000, to 1387 enrolments in 2003. In terms of annual student training hours, a truer indication of the demand for training facilities in the Huon Valley, hours have increased almost 78%, from 169,748 annual student hours in 2000, to 301,799 in 2003.

Existing Facilities

Huonville Library

The Huonville Library is currently located in a leased property at 15A Main Road, Huonville. The original lease was executed in December 1992, and currently comprises of 100 sqm of floor space.

The current Library premises are fairly small. There is a split level through the middle of the area, which was originally two shop units, making use of the space difficult, and has posed some safety problems for clients in making the step visible.

Amenities for both staff and members of the public are very limited.

Accommodation at Huonville has been considered unsatisfactory for many years, but no alternatives have been available.

A community library based at the school has been considered, but was rejected, principally because of the distance of the school from the town centre, and the difficulty of accommodating the long spread of public opening hours with the schools needs.

23 Wilmot Street (Huon Open Learning Centre)

23 Wilmot Street is an Adult Education property that until recently came under TAFE's property portfolio. Organisational changes now see Adult Education Assets entering the Department of Education's property portfolio. The property is located off the Main Road and is some distance from the Huonville Library.

Online Access Centre

The Huon Online Access Centre is currently community managed through the Continuing Education and Training Committee for the Huon (CETCH). The space available to the OAC is very small with limited office and meeting room space.

Huon Open Learning

This private RTO has a unique relationship with the Department as it provides accredited training and services to support the delivery of VET in Schools programs (Huonville Hgh School). It also provides a range of general community access and

education programs funded under competitive bids (eg literacy programs, return to work, womens access courses).

TAFE

The TAFE Literacy Co-ordinator is located at Wilmot St and currently provides services on an average of 1.5 days per week.

Centrelink and Service Tasmania

Both Centrelink and Service Tasmania currently occupy a small building owned by the Huon Valley Council. The Council intends to occupy this building next year, requiring both Centrelink and Service Tasmania to find new accommodation.

PROPOSAL

Introduction

The underpinning philosophy of the LINC is that it will provide increased opportunities for education and training and this will be potentially supported through a range of temporary services provided by private RTO's, TAFE and the University of Tasmania. In addition, the facilities will be open to hire by community groups. A schedule of rental charges will be developed.

The new LINC Building will contribute to the formation of a civic centre and service zone in Huonville. Sited on the corner of Sale Street and Skinner Drive, where the Magistrates Court is located, the LINC will, along with the nearby council chambers, Community Health Centre, Police Station, and future bus transit centre and car park interchange planned by the Council, create a centrally located hub for the public.

The LINC Project also provides a working model for co-operation between all three levels of Government.

The Huon Valley Council is supportive of the proposal and has indicated that it will contribute towards the carparking requirements of the LINC as well as improving the roads and streetscapes adjacent to the site.

The Department of Education has worked closely with the community, and other State Government bodies.

Discussions with Magistrates Court representatives indicated a willingness to respond to the LINC proposal and investigations have resulted in a successful arrangement for court hearings within the new development. Discussions have also been held with Tasmania Police asset managers as the court co-joins the Huonville Police Station.

Discussions have also taken place with representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice and Service Tasmania, to ensure that the proposal is efficient and is not recreating or duplicating existing provisions.

Building Occupants

VET in Schools (ViS)

Huonville High School currently runs its VET in Schools program through Huon Open Learning (HOL) and will be relocated from 23 Wilmot Street.

Huon Open Learning

This private RTO provides accredited training and services to support the delivery of VET in Schools programs, and a range of general community access and education programs funded under competitive bids. HOL will relocate from 23 Wilmot Street and pay an annual rental for its tenancy in the LINC.

State Library

The Huonville Library is currently located in an inadequate facility on Main Road under a commercial rental agreement. Its lease is not planned to be renewed and it will relocate to form a closer relationship with the Huon Online Access Centre and the Education and Training sectors.

Online Access Centre

The Huon OAC is currently located at Wilmot St. It is currently community managed through the Continuing Education and Training Committee for the Huon (CETCH). It will relocate to gain greater flexibility and increased capacity for improved services through cooperative efforts and integration of OAC and library services and provide more opportunities for cooperation in lifelong education and training initiatives.

TAFE

The TAFE Literacy Co-ordinator is located at Wilmot St and currently provides services on an average of 1.5 days per week.

Centrelink and Service Tasmania

These two services are currently co-located in premises rented from the Huon Valley Council. The Council requires this building for their own use in the coming months.

Business Enterprise Centre

This is seen as part of the Education, Training and Information LINC space and its provision is seen as a community good, providing a closer relationship between business enterprise and training programs.

Temporary occupancy

LINC will provide increased opportunities for education and training and this will be supported through a range of temporary occupants including private RTO's, TAFE and the University of Tasmania. In addition, the facilities will be open to hire by community groups.

Magistrate's Court

The proposed site is currently owned by the Dept. of Justice and houses the Magistrates Court primarily. The LINC will see part of the existing building demolished.

The Magistrates Court has indicated an intermittent ongoing requirement for occupancy of the Court Room, access to a room for the Magistrate and waiting rooms for witnesses etc. It is agreed that Justice will sell the site to DoE.

BUILDING SERVICES

Compliance

All new facilities and building services and systems will comply with BCA requirements, the Building Act 2000 and local council requirements.

Site Reticulation

Power

The site main switchboard will be upgraded to cater for the increased load. Aurora will provide a new point of attachment in the form of a turret on the property boundary.

Fire Detection

A new addressable Fire Indicator Panel (FIP) will be provided throughout the site including the existing police building and cell blocks. The FIP will be connected to the Tasmanian Fire Brigaded. All works will comply with AS1670.

Communications

A category 6 structured cabling system implementing star topology will be provided throughout. The system will be suitable for both voice and data. All works will be installed to AS3008.

Site Lighting

General security lighting will be provided by wall mounted bulhead luminaries. Car park lighting will be provided on the site. This will be controlled via time clocks and PE cell from local switchboards. All lighting will comply with AS1158.

Library

Power

General purpose socket outlets will be provided throughout the library supplied from local distribution switchboards. Residual Current Devices will be fitted to all socket outlets.

Lighting

Lighting will be achieved by the use of fluorescent luminaries. T5 fluorescent tubes and electronic ballasts will be used where applicable to increase the overall energy efficiency of the building. K19 diffusers will be installed in all general areas and the use of louvres will be used to reduce glare issues in areas where screen based tasks will be undertaken such as work rooms.

Heating

Flush Ceiling mounted radiant heaters will be provided throughout the space. They will be controlled via local space thermostats and after hours controls.

Communications

A category 6 structured cabling system implementing star topology will be provided throughout. The system will be suitable for both voice and data. All works will be installed to AS3008. Outlets will be provided at all computer locations.

Online Access Centre.

Power

General purpose socket outlets will be provided throughout the area, supplied from local distribution switchboards. Care will be taken to limit the number of outlets per circuit. Residual Current Devices will be fitted to all socket outlets.

Lighting

Lighting will be achieved by the use of fluorescent luminaries. T5 fluorescent tubes and electronic ballasts will be used where applicable to increase the overall energy efficiency of the building. Luminaries will be fitted with louvres to reduce the effects of glare on the computer screens.

Communications

A category 6 structured cabling system implementing star topology will be provided throughout. The system will be suitable for both voice and data. All works will be installed to AS3008. Outlets will be provided at all computer locations.

Education and Training

Power

General purpose socket outlets will be provided throughout the library supplied from local distribution switchboards. Residual Current Devices will be fitted to all socket outlets.

Lighting

Lighting will be achieved by the use of fluorescent luminaries. T5 fluorescent tubes and electronic ballasts will be used where applicable to increase the overall energy efficiency of the building. K19 diffusers will be installed in all general areas.

Heating

Flush Ceiling mounted radiant heaters will be provided throughout all spaces except for the existing magistrates. They will be controlled via local space thermostats and after hours controls.

Communications

A category 6 structured cabling system implementing star topology will be provided throughout. The system will be suitable for both voice and data. All works will be installed to AS3008. Outlets will be provided at all computer locations.

Service Tasmania

Power

General purpose socket outlets will be provided throughout the Service Tasmania Tenancy all outlets will be supplied from local distribution switchboards. Residual Current Devices will be fitted to all socket outlets.

Lighting

Lighting will be achieved by the use of fluorescent luminaries. T5 fluorescent tubes and electronic ballasts will be used where applicable to increase the overall energy efficiency of the building. Luminaries will be fitted with louvres to reduce the affects of glare on the computer screens.

Communications

A category 6 structured cabling system implementing star topology will be provided throughout. The system will be suitable for both voice and data. All works will be installed to AS3008. Outlets will be provided at all computer locations.

Centrelink

General

The installation will involve the base building fitout only, including general lighting, general Socket outlets, general security detection and communications all works will be in accordance with the requirements of Centrelinks “Small Office Brief”.

Power

General purpose socket outlets will be provided throughout the library supplied from local distribution switchboards. Residual Current Devices will be fitted to all socket outlets. All toilets will be fitted with hand driers.

Lighting

Lighting will be achieved by the use of fluorescent luminaries. T5 fluorescent tubes and electronic ballasts will be used where applicable to increase the overall energy efficiency of the building. K12 diffusers will be installed in all general areas.

Mechanical Services

General

A philosophy of natural ventilation has been employed as far as possible with air conditioning provided to specific areas or to meet specific tenancy briefing. The air conditioning systems will be controlled by a building management system capable of being programmed both locally and externally. Exhaust systems will be grouped so that the roof penetrations will occur in defined areas.

Design Criteria

In summer, ambient conditions will prevail with external temperatures generally less than 28°C. During winter, naturally ventilated areas will be treated with low level background heaters as detailed in the electrical section.

Outdoor plant

Outdoor plant will be located on the centre of the roof over the existing magistrates building. Access shall be provided to meet the relevant requirements of AS 1470, AS 1657, AS/NZS 1892.1 and AS/NZS 2865.

Noise Ratings

The noise levels will comply with the requirements of AS1055 Acoustics - Description and Measurements of environment noise. Noise levels attributable to the mechanical will be those nominated in AIRAH Design Aid- Noise Control in and around buildings

Library

The library and areas facing directly onto the foyer area will be ventilated by high / low level vents to produce circulation and crossflow. The resource room and tea room may require mechanical extraction due to photocopier and laminator exhaust requirements. The ductwork will be vented through the roof.

Online Access Centre

The online access centre will be naturally ventilated using operable windows. Wall mounted split system air conditioners will be provided to overcome the heat gain from the computer equipment and solar loads during hot weather. The outdoor units will be mounted on the roof.

Education and Training

All classrooms will be naturally ventilated as far as possible with high/low level vents and use of operable windows. Wall mounted split system air conditioners will be provided to overcome the heat gain from the computer equipment and solar loads during hot weather. All store rooms will be naturally ventilated.

Service Tasmania

The Service Tasmania tenancy shall be provided with split ducted air conditioned plant to all office and service areas.

Centrelink

The Centrelink tenancy will be provided with air conditioning systems to meet the requirements of the Centrelink CentreSpace Small Office Brief. In general, the tenancy shall be air conditioned with separate ducted air conditioning systems, appropriately zoned to meet the requirements of the brief and good design practice.

The shared meeting room and shared staff room will also be provided with an independent air conditioning system so as to comply with the Centrelink tenancy requirements.

Amenities

The amenity areas will be provided with general exhaust systems to meet the requirements of AS1668.2.

LOCATION PLAN

Site and Locality Plan

The Huon Valley LINC proposal is located on the corner of Skinner Drive and Sale Street directly across the road from the Huon Valley Health Centre and the Huon Valley Council Chambers and adjacent to the existing Police and Magistrates Court.

The proposed location will assist in developing the town's civic precinct.

Being located on the corner, the LINC complex will be visible from the Huon Highway; accordingly the site has excellent exposure.

Plans are in the development stage to locate the Huonville Bus Exchange adjacent to this site off Skinner drive. The Huon Valley Council is also to provide the car parking required for this site.

Accordingly, the complex is accessible for all Huon Valley residents travelling on foot, bus or car.

The complex has been located on site in such a way that should demand dictate beyond current expectations; it will be easy to expand the complex without substantial alteration.

A significant benefit from locating the LINC on this site is the incorporation of the under utilised Magistrates Court (currently used one day per month on average). Being able to link into the courts existing site infrastructure will provide significant cost savings.

Floor Plan

The Huon Valley LINC provides for a range of differing government agencies, client groups usage and hours of operation. Accordingly the building has been designed to provide as much flexibility as possible while providing the core requirements of each client group.

Entry

The entry is located on the northwest corner of the facility readily accessed from Skinner Drive and Sale Street, automatic doors provide an airlock to minimise unwanted air changes. An awning extends over this entry to protect patrons. It is anticipated that there will be a significant signage opportunity in this area. A welcoming entry, an open building façade encouraging public access, and simple circulation pattern with readily defined tenanted areas characterises this building.

Circulation

A public corridor links internal spaces. This corridor has been conceived as a mall or internal street. Opportunities will exist for specific signage, advertising of events and encourage users to explore the opportunities on offer. The corridor provides a link into Service Tasmania and Centrelink, accesses the public library, online facilities and education and training spaces.

State Library

The library tenancy has excellent exposure being adjacent to the front entry and facing onto both Skinner Drive and Sale Street.

External walls are a combination of glazing and solid panels allowing controlled daylight and vision into the building without compromising usable floor area. The central desk is located on an internal wall. This location will provide excellent supervision over the entry, the book stocks and into the Online area.

Building finishes to this area will be selected to reduce noise. A quality carpet finish over a concrete slab, acoustic ceiling tiles recess, low brightness light fittings and painted plasterboard walls. Bookshelves and storage systems will be selected and laid out to ensure the views of supervision are not inhibited, the book stocks are readily accessible and the furniture and décor match the architecture.

The library and library workroom have a combined area of 200m².

Online Access Centre

The Online Access Centre is located next to the library to allow the sharing of staff resources and encourage community participation.

A large operable wall/door will open the Online area into the library space. Depending on the activities being undertaken in the library this door can be closed. Access will then be provided from either the public corridor with the LINC or after hours from an external door fronting onto Sale Street.

The Online Access Centre will be provided with similar décor and building services as provided in the Library.

Education and Training

Five individual training spaces are provided within the facility each approximately 40m². Four of these spaces can be opened up and provide two 80m² spaces. The largest space currently exists and is being used as the Magistrates Court once per month. This space will be reconfigured and redecorated while remaining a Magistrates Court to provide a quality training area.

These spaces will be appropriately finished to provide a suitable teaching environment with acoustic ceilings; suitable wall finishes and carpeted floors. The plan allows for the future expansion of the perimeter rooms should demand dictate.

A student tearoom is provided to encourage networking, social interaction and a breakout space. It is located on the southern side of the facility and is directly linked to an external courtyard.

The student tearoom and courtyard is located away from the main public areas of the building to maximise student privacy. Limited tea making facilities, kitchen table and chairs are envisaged in this area. The courtyard would be provided with hard paving, perimeter walls to contain student activity and would be configured to discourage access and egress from this area.

The Education and Training facility is also provided with a number of individual offices, providing discreet space for a range of activities including the Huon Open

Learning co-ordinator, the Literacy co-ordinator, the VIS teachers and the LINC co-ordinator who manages the running of the LINC.

Each office space will be provided with an acoustic ceiling, plaster walls and carpeted floor. Offices are sized to accommodate two staff, together with their equipment, storage and records.

Staff And Public Facilities

Male, female and disabled toilet facilities are accessed from the public corridor. Significant cost savings have been achieved with the co-location of these facilities, servicing the buildings and occupants accessing services within the LINC complex.

Flush plaster ceilings, impact resistant villaboard walls and non-slip vinyl floors will provide a low maintenance, long lasting finish in these areas.

Centrelink and Service Tasmania

The buildings envelope with concrete floors, carpet, plaster walls and acoustic ceiling tiles is provided in this contract as base building works Centrelink and Service Tasmania areas of the facility will be separately fitted out and decorated by others.

Centrelink and Service Tasmania are provided with a separate entry and airlock accessed from Skinner Drive. This access meets the requirements of their brief allowing separate hours of operation and their own unique address, allowing patrons to decide how they wish to access the facility.

The co-location of Centrelink and Service Tasmania allows the sharing of public space, shared staff amenities, shared public amenities and sharing of IT infrastructure costs. Significant cost savings will be afforded by this co-location.

To meet the requirements of Centrelink this portion of the building will be provided with an air-conditioned environment. The specific power and data configuration required for Centrelink operation will be incorporated into the fitout works arranged by the fitout contract.

Magistrates Court

The design of the Magistrates Court area will be designed to maximise flexibility of use given the Magistrates Court only operates on an average one day per month.

The existing Magistrates Court is to be retained, refurbished and re-decorated. The existing fixed furniture will be removed and new furniture will be incorporated that can either be rolled away when not in use or otherwise used differently when the court is configured into a classroom or teaching space.

An office will be located next to the court for the magistrates' use. Lawyers and their clients will be provided with two other office areas on days when the court is in session for their use. Client access is located at the rear of the building.

The courtrooms heating and ventilation systems, lighting and power circuits will be replaced in the redevelopment. The space will be provided with heating and ventilation, not air-conditioning, new data telephone and power circuits suitable for both courts and teaching functions.

Elevations

The design and elevation treatment of the Huon Valley LINC recognises the site context, the adjacent police building and the magistrates court. The various roof planes create an interesting roof scape. The scale of the building has been matched to surrounding buildings such as the Health Centre.

The buildings structure is steel, supporting a steel truss roof. Each roof frame supports the roof on the top chord and the adjacent roof on the bottom chord. Accordingly the roof profile is achieved at little additional cost.

The massing of the building indicates the public function, provides interest and provides security for the public. Windows provide natural light to inside while allowing views into the public areas of the building.

The steel roof frame is supported on steel columns set on a repeating grid. Walls are supported between the columns on a steel framework. Windows where they occur are set in this framework. The brick façade system is clipped to the steel frame. The building is proposed to be double-glazed and have high levels of insulation in the walls and ceiling.

The courtroom is to be retained and built around. The parapet areas will be retained and mechanical plant will be installed behind this parapet.

Two-tone masonry elements will provide a feature façade, steel columns will be clad with profiled composite pre-finished steel sheet.

At high-level cement sheet infill panels with a texture coating will be coloured to compliment the masonry elements.

LIFE CYCLE COSTING

The principles of Life Cycle Costing have been utilised in the design of the Huon LINC.

The principles employed to minimise both capital and ongoing running costs include:

- co-location;
- plan form;
- building shape;
- mass;
- building fabric;
- orientation; and
- insulation.

Collocation

The selection of the site adjacent to an existing building structure allows the existing infrastructure to be utilised.

Site services to be shared include water supply, fire service, sewer, power and data phone, to save duplication and cost.

Building Plan

Following extension negotiation with the building users a flexible appropriately sized and optimised design has been prepared (that if appropriate can be expanded). The collocation of shared facilities, the optimising of the building footprint and, as limited as practicable allocations of space for circulation ensures the building is not oversized, while providing the required accommodation.

Founding and Fabric

The Huon LINC building site is comprised of alluvial soils deposited by the Huon River. Founding is poor. To eliminate the requirement for piles a lightweight building solution has been adopted. The building will be configured to float the concrete ground slab on the founding material. The proposed solution will limit excavation and the need for large footings. External walls will generally be lightweight and well insulated.

Internal walls will be metal stud plasterboard and impact resistant dado linings. Ceilings will be lightweight drop in ceiling panels supported from a steel suspension system from a steel truss frame arrangement.

Orientation

The site being bounded by Skinner Drive and Sale Street controls the buildings orientation.

Accordingly the building has two principle elevations, one facing northeast and the second facing northwest. To limit solar gain the building has been provided with appropriate roof overhangs to shade the elevations.

Glazing to these elevations will be heat absorbing low e glass that will limit heat gain and ensure optimal internal conditions with minimal energy expenditure.

Insulation

The building is designed to be well insulated with R2.5 walls and R3.5 ceilings to maintain optimum conditions while minimising energy costs.

Heating/Ventilation/Lighting

The building has been divided into two zones – air-conditioning and naturally ventilated.

The area leased to Centrelink and Service Tasmania shall be air-conditioned to the specific requirements of Centrelink.

The public library offices and teaching spaces shall be naturally ventilated where practicable and otherwise mechanically ventilated. Radiant ceiling heaters shall be utilised to provide heating to these areas.

Electrical and mechanical engineers have been engaged to optimise both heating and lighting layouts to minimise both capital and ongoing running costs.

Where practicable the design shall incorporate local products for incorporation into the project to minimise transport costs.

Local trades persons appropriately skilled will where practicable be employed and trained during the construction of the facility providing both income and skilled base training through development of the new Huon LINC facility.

BUDGET AND INDICATIVE COST ESTIMATE

Total Capital Cost

The total capital cost is estimated at \$2.6m which will be funded as follows:

Proceeds from sale of Wilmot Street	\$ 150,000
ANTA Funding (maximum available)	\$ 547,000
DoE Asset Sales (claimed in 03-04)	\$ 685,000
DoE Asset Sales (within CLAF yet to be claimed)	\$ 1,218,000

The component of the capital cost that relates to Service Tasmania and Centrelink, an amount of \$943,250, will provide an annual rental revenue stream to DoE of \$129,210. These funds will be used to cover the required annual operating costs of the centre (net cost of \$41,175) which will leave an annual amount of \$88,035 available for use in DoE's Maintenance and Minor Works program.

In this context, the one-off investment in the facilities for use by Service Tasmania and Centrelink provides significant recurrent benefits to DoE in having a funding source available to undertake additional maintenance and minor works projects for schools. Using net present value analysis, the additional investment in the facilities for Service Tasmania and Centrelink is effectively recovered in only 7.5 years. This needs to be considered in the context of the benefits which will accrue to DoE in having ownership of an asset of significant value and having a recurrent revenue stream available for school maintenance projects.

Construction Budget

The construction budget has been established following the preparation of schematic plans, costing and the re-working of plans to reflect the requirement of users and minimise construction cost while maintaining quality.

Cost estimation has been undertaken by a cost professional, engaged by the principle consultant.

The construction budget is based on a limit of cost estimate prepared 6th August 2004 totalling \$1,175,000.

Within this figure allowances have been made for preliminaries and general conditions, site works and services, project contingencies totalling 5%.

No allowances have been made in the construction budget for professional fees, window furnishings, car parking (provided by the Huon Valley Council), and escalation in costs, artwork or GST.

EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Friday, 15 October last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to the Huon Valley Council Chambers, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Siobhan Gaskell - Director Library and Information Services, Department of Education
- Tim Gourlay - Manager Facility Services, Department of Education
- Brad Wheeler - Project Officer, Department of Education
- Andrew Floyd - Architect, Philp Lighton
- Geoff Cockerill, General Manager, Huon Valley Council
- Garry Langford, Chair Huon Valley Learning Reference Group

Overview

The Committee invited the witnesses to provide an overview of the proposal. Ms Gaskell responded:

... the department comprises school education, adult and community education, libraries and online access centres. The vision that we are working to, that the minister has clearly articulated through Learning Together, is a community that embraces life-long learning. We are keenly aware as a department, too, that the value of the asset that we have tied up in our building portfolio is significant and that it is important to ensure that these facilities get the maximum use by the whole community. We are also a department that embraces the concept of partnership and we particularly look at this project as demonstrating that.

It is against that backdrop that we have put in the proposal. The Huon LINC as we call it, or the Learning and Information Network Centre project office, is a new and innovative initiative for Tasmania which reflects a philosophy of life-long learning for regional community. It builds on a number of other examples that we have had off that in recent years with community library, the Tasman Peninsula, Beaconsfield and Campbell Town. We have also got combined access centres and skill centres; more

recently the Sheffield Learning Centre, which brought together the community library, the access centre and skill centre.

The opportunity for Huonville actually came to us late in 2002 when we were in a position to put in a funding bid to the Commonwealth. At that time it described the LINC as providing education and training, information services, business development and community services. We envisaged a service centre that would sit in the regional community and then have nodes from it into servicing the whole region. There are a number of reasons why we looked at the Huon Valley as the preferred area to run that model in.

Once successful with that bid for funding from the Commonwealth, we actually then took a step back to consider the sort of facility that would actually best suit the Huon area. I am a member of the Service Tasmania board so I was aware that Service Tasmania and Centrelink were likely to be looking for new accommodation and it is particularly that which helped to draw in discussion with those two areas to see whether they would be interested in working with us on this proposal.

The potential stakeholders had a good look around Huonville itself at possible options for its location. In the end we decided that the Magistrates Court area offered probably the best in terms of location and space. ... it certainly contributes to the formation of a civic centre and service mode in Huonville. I know that has been a long-held vision of the council to see that developed in this area. It is adjacent to the council chambers, the new community health centre, to the police station and the future bus transit centre. From the education, training and information area we certainly have some service demands. We are looking at the LINC as providing a facility that will hopefully extend access to library and information services in the valley but also increase opportunities for education and training. In the education and training area since 2000, the VET enrolments have increased almost 64 per cent, with 884 enrolments in 2000 and around 1 400 enrolments in 2003. Annual student training hours, which are probably a better indication of demand for training hours, have increased nearly 78 per cent over that three-year period, from 169 000 up to 300 000.

We are also finding an increasing demand for community and adult training. The site that currently houses Huon Open Learning in Wilmot Road is pretty well close to capacity in the space it has for those services to be delivered.

The Huonville Library is one of the top branch libraries in the State. It has had a sustained increase in demand for its services over the last five years. The issues have increased there by 17 per cent. In recognition of that we have put in an additional nine hours per week in 2002. You have seen the facility and I can assure you that it is inadequate. Certainly if you look at it on a regional comparative basis, this area is by far the least serviced with its library. The facility has a split in it, which presents many issues around client and staff safety and access for people with disabilities. Equally, the access centre, which is located at Wilmot Road, is in a very small space and, again, in regional comparisons you will find that it is the smallest by far. More space will

certainly allow it to increase the range of services that it can provide. It goes without any office space and has little meeting room access.

I think this proposal is really looking at bringing together a new management arrangement to where we have co-located facilities. Until now, we have done that: simply co-located. We have not really integrated the management of those services. In this model we are looking to put in a regional coordinator who will manage the education, training and information component of that service. They will bring together under them the library staff and access centre staff and run it as an integrated service unit.

We also believe that the co-location with Service Tasmania, Centrelink and the business enterprise centre equally will bring new partnerships, potentially four partnerships in the services that the complex delivers, particularly because there are many clients in common between those different organisations.

Mr Gourlay added:-

... In developing the concept, a variety of options were identified and considered and that started with consideration of the consolidation with a library at the school. The feasibility of doing that was undertaken and, as Siobhan has indicated, we have a number of community libraries co-located on school sites, but it was felt in this case that the school library did not really lend itself for expansion and development as a community library, so that option, whilst it existed and was identified and explored, was not a preferred option.

The existing premises have a number of shortcomings and were always seen as a short-term option for the department when that lease was entered into. A number of sites were considered, with an emphasis on establishing this civic and service precinct at Huonville. The site of the Magistrates Court was finally settled on as the preferred site with the best features to complement the establishment of a civic centre. Another site that was considered was immediately behind the building that we are sitting in, the Council Chambers. There is an area, part of the carpark, that could have been further developed. An area adjacent to the new health building was also contemplated but that too was considered not to be as suitable as the preferred site of the Magistrates Court.

I would put on record too that there has been a deal of negotiating with the Justice Department and it has been agreed that the Department of Education will actually acquire that building, which is also jointly owned by the Police department. There will be a consideration in the purchase price in view of the fact that Justice will continue to operate some services - court hearings - from the new building. Again that gives testimony to the fact that there has been a lot of dialogue, a lot of coordination between not only government departments to get this project up but also different tiers of government, given that the Australian Government will be represented in the building through the presence of Centrelink, the State Government through a number of varieties - Service Tasmania as well as Justice, as well as Education and others - and then of course local government representation through the Huon Valley Council. It has

participated not only in the provision of upgraded services but has also been involved in the development of the concept and concurs fully - I think we will hear from the general manager shortly - with the preferred solution.

Co-location concept

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the co-location of education and training facilities with the Magistrates Court. Mr Gourlay responded:-

It is an interesting outcome. The clients of the Justice department who will be having preliminary hearings in that courtroom are members of the Huon Valley community. This centre will serve the full spectrum for the community members of the Huon Valley. We believe there will be a lot of synergies and a lot of interaction with the cross-section of services that are provided there. So, yes, on one day a month -

Ms Gaskell added:-

They (The Department of Justice) schedule their hearings a year ahead and they have agreed to schedule those for Fridays, which is when the students are out on their work placement.

The Committee sought to know how the Court Room would be fitted out in a way that may lend itself to other uses. Ms Gaskell responded:-

The Justice Department are quite open to having a flexible arrangement in that space so we are seeing that as a training space in the time that it is not available, which is really one day a month. The court furniture is obviously Andrew's challenge to solve that but they are certainly quite open to it. They are working more and more towards video linking of courts and the like and again that centre will have equipment to service that.

Mr Floyd added later in the hearing:-

... We believe that we will effectively strip out that room and set it up predominantly as a teaching space. The Department of Justice has requested a dais but also some moveable furniture so we would anticipate using the room that is adjacent to that court - the Magistrate's Chambers - to locate the specific magistrate's furniture for those other days that the court is not in session. We anticipate the dais may stay there but that is to be resolved.

... It is really about communication. In that teaching space there is a requirement to communicate between the various people in the room and the teacher. In the magistrate's arrangements there is also communication backwards and forwards between the defendant and the plaintiff, so if we provide a space that has the appropriate decoration and in which communication can occur properly, it should be all right. It is not a kind of kindergarten space and it is not a TAFE college space; it is somewhere in between that has responsibility and respect and engenders feelings of appropriate behaviour. I think we can achieve that

The Committee sought the view of the Huon Valley Learning Reference Group as to the co-location. Mr Langford responded:-

The original concept talked about bringing together more than just the education and training approach to the library. It also included welfare services and all the other bits, so basically that is the approach we have taken, which really to some degree rules out the school. It is a little bit further away and probably we don't want that kind of stuff near the school, I don't know. We had a lot of discussion about siting. We looked at the old theatre down the road and then at this building across the street here, but the limitations of the site were really the major thing. In developing this community precinct in Huonville a key component was having something available to do that. So the school part of it was fairly rapidly removed if we were going to stick to that original concept that it is about more than just learning and education and library and that sort of stuff.

... from the group's perspective, the VET-in-schools part has always been a service we wanted to deliver from the building. It is currently delivered in the Wilmot Road building, which we don't think is adequate for that service, so by default we are actually going to get people in the front door right from the outset because of VET in schools. That was part of the original deal. It was certainly the reason the Commonwealth put its hand in its pocket, to further advance vocational education and training. We see that as a major component to getting the thing happening. Beyond that, many of the service providers, particularly in training needs - and we have several who sit around the table at the group - have indicated their willingness to use it, so that will bring in clientele.

Co-ordination of 'outreach services'

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the utilization of technology to outreach communities such as Dover, Geeveston and Cygnet. Ms Gaskell responded:-

The technology backbone is already there because the existing government schools through the region are already getting on the same network. What we are looking at, through this regional coordinator, is someone who is going to work with the Huon Valley on the needs of the valley in terms of education and training and really start to provide training programs and education opportunities as required, but in a coordinated way, particularly across Geeveston, Dover, Cygnet and the like where there are schools.

Adult Education has recently come into the department. There are access centres in those towns as well and I think it is really about looking at it from a regional perspective. You can be running classes through video technology. The department is already doing that in a statewide sense. It is really more about ensuring that people in the valley know those services are available and providing the space and expertise at the local level to tap into those as required.

Mr Langford added:-

... the key component from the group's perspective is that it is a hub to service satellite centres. That is part of this concept as well, but that will not work effectively until we have something. We need a full-time person who is committed for a few years because it takes a while to build that up. Ultimately we see it as a one-stop shop. We need people to know that you can ring there and talk to someone who is going to assist you with education or training or whatever. We do not envisage, through our group for the overall management of this, that the co-ordinator will run courses. They are not there to do that; they are not a service provider in that sense. They are there as a co-ordinator and to facilitate. It is a key component.

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the level of commitment of the Department for the 'Co-ordinator' position. Ms Gaskell responded:-

... it has been signed off to have a permanent full-time position to do that. The position is very much about providing training providers or getting the university or TAFE to come in. As Garry said, it is not about them actually delivering the training themselves. It is also about trying to provide a path to what is available virtually, whether it is from the university or interstate. It is about trying to make it easier for the clients of this region to know the full brief of services they can access.

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what, if any, input the local community will have in relation to the appointment of the Co-ordinator. Ms Gaskell responded:-

We, through the reference group, had long debates over the management arrangement for the facility - would it be totally community managed or would the department manage it or what can we find in between? We have agreed that the department will employ the person but there would be a strong advisory group established to work with that coordinator on the whole planning process, the surplus provision and the like. I would expect that in the selection of that position you would be looking at a community representative being involved in that selection panel. It is very much seen as trying to find the best of both worlds, of marrying the community needs and the department's needs in terms of a management facility.

I have been one of the strong advocates for that sort of arrangement because, with the access centres that we have had, some communities certainly find it hard to handle the hard bits of management where you have got problem employees or whatever. I would put that quite strongly to the Huon Valley reference group, that you are probably better off not having to manage the poor-performing employee but to still have the benefit of being a strong advisory group. It is really important for community to have input into the selection of the person and feel comfortable to work with them into the future.

Mr Langford added:-

... (Regarding) the coordinator position and how that person is managed, and one of the key things that we spoke about for a long time at our group was that on the one side you have this complete community ownership/control deal and on the other side you have the department sort of just running it for you.

We were strongly of the view that the community process is terrific for a while but usually loses steam. You just cannot do this kind of stuff on that basis. There is a limited amount of community resource to run all these things. You have more and more organisations popping up so you cannot stretch yourself so far so we recommended that it is an advisory board-type approach where we have strong input into policies and programs and coordinate with the person actually doing the job so we know what we are getting but do not have to worry about finding the money each day through service provision, because that is usually the first thing that happens. You get somebody there to do a job and the next thing you know they have to make a dollar.

We do not ask the teachers in the school to return a dollar on what they do each day so we should not ask this kind of person to return a dollar. It should be measured in the outcomes, the actual training delivered and the kind of services we provide. It is through this process, we believe, that we can have good input into that process. We have a commitment from the Government to supply a high-level person capable of making decisions and doing things and we want that person engaged, once we get the sign-off on this, six months prior to the building opening, so they are involved in all of this tick-tack stuff to make sure that the thing will suit the required needs when it starts. So we do need that planning starting from now, so that is an important component to make sure that things are in the right place and we have done all the bits.

Adequacy of the area of space

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether the area of space proposed to be provided within the Magistrates Court for education and training will be sufficient for future needs. Ms Gaskell responded:-

Yes; the Magistrates Court, 95 per cent of the time, is education and training space. Equally, the access centre space is quite flexible so you really have provision of three large areas for education and training. They can be split up and you can end up with six smaller areas for that. I think a key role for the coordinator is actually organising programs that are working on a 24/7 basis, using the facilities in a broader way. There are certainly meeting-room capacities at the health centre. We believe this is sufficient space to meet the demands. I think it is about how you schedule time and provision, making sure that there is a good booking system in there so that you are using your space efficiently to meet the size of the groups that are attending the facility.

Provision of IT workstations

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the flexibility of the design in terms of provision of workstations and the interface between the library and the On-line Access Centre. Ms Gaskell responded:-

... I would be looking at the coordinator. The centre would have a provision of computer equipment and the like. You would be allocating computer equipment as required to those areas. You can move it around easily; it is not fixed computing equipment. Reece

High, I think, has gone a long way down that path, trying to bring flexibility into the technology. You are not putting it permanently in a place and that's where it sits.

... so you can actually take the machines if there's 10 required for this particular course in this space. Again, we need to go through some more detail with the architect and within the department. There is clearly the need to provide secure 24/7 access to the access centre to provide services to clients who are authorised to come and go to do whatever. Equipment will be provided there and should be well connected and supported. I guess the whole concept around this space is trying to maximise the flexibility so that it can have multi-purpose and effective use.

... between the library and the access centre, there are doors and doors that can be opened and closed as required but we would be certainly looking at some periods of the day where those are open so that people are seeing that as a total facility. There may be other times of the day where you just want the access centre facility operating. Certainly the technology is in the library and with libraries the technology, the book collections and the activities are all important components.

Mr Floyd added:-

... we have actually gone through a pretty elaborate process to finish up with this particular arrangement. One of the things we wanted to do was maximise the exposure of the library and by putting it on the corner of Skinner Drive and Sale Street we have actually done that so that community members, as they drive around in their cars or are circulating around the streets, can actually see the library. We thought that was particularly important. The library is a managed space so it has always got some support with it, some management.

There is a strong connection between the library, which Siobhan was talking about, and the online access centre so the librarian on a number of occasions would be looking after the online access centre. However, the online access centre operates out of hours, so during the day time the online access centre will be opened up to the library and it will effectively run as one space. After hours - say, at 9 o'clock when I want to talk to somebody in London or something - I come in and I have my own key to the online access centre; it has an external door and provision so that I can use it after hours.

It also makes good sense to be able to link that online access centre into some of the other more structured areas of the education and training computer areas so that both of those sets of doors can be opened up and provide effectively one large computer-based training area. It is quite important to have that link between the online centre and the library.

Centrelink has its own set of criteria, including its own unique access point which we have provided down on Skinner Drive, and when you put that 300-odd square metres up onto the other side it takes away some of the focus of the shared facility. We have kind of talked about it as a bit of a hub and a node.

... I am going to use another analogy which I reckon is a pretty good one - that it is a shopping centre with 10 or 12 different tenancies. It has a butcher shop, a greengrocer, a chemist, a chicken shop - you name it, it is in here - and the orange section on your plan is the mall. You go down through the mall: you might be going off to Service Tasmania to renew your driver's licence, so you head off down through the public corridor into Service Tasmania. You might also need to organise your family payment so you can duck into Centrelink. Then you might really need something to read, so you slip over to the library; then you have this idea that you might like to start a small business.

All of these functions are contained in the building off the public corridor and the way that we have linked the actual tenancies is based on the brief that we have produced. What that significant consultation, all those cuts of the plan and that briefing process showed were the synergies and linkages between the various groups and how they meshed together. At one stage we might have had the LINC coordinator on the bottom right hand side of the plan but now he is back into the middle near the front door and by twisting all those around we have come up with this particular machination.

If, for instance, growth was required in the future, we believe that we could actually extend the education and training area down the plan and -

Existing Centrelink building

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the proposed use of the existing Centrelink building after the new facility had been occupied. Mr Cockerill responded:-

Council purchased the buildings four years ago after some negotiations. ... It will be converted into council offices. We currently house our engineering and environmental development services in one half of the building and we will be expanding to take over the entire building and expand that.

Consultation process

The Committee received a written submission from Councillor Liz Smith of the Huon Valley Council. Councillor Smith submitted, inter alia, that the proposal for the Huon LINC had not been publicized in the Huon Valley, and questioned whether other options had been examined. In light of this submission, the Committee questioned the witnesses as to what, if any, consultation had taken place within the community regarding the proposed works. Mr Langford made the following submission:-

... my involvement has been since June 2003. Initially after the proof of concept work was completed by Chris White, CETCH - the Continuing Education Training Committee for Huon - set up a reference group. At that time they felt that was probably as wide as they needed to go because they were obviously a representative group here in the valley, but there was some discussion between OPCET at the time and CETCH about broadening and including some people maybe from outside the current education and training network to become involved so both Frances Bender,

who is a Director of Huon Aquaculture and myself, were invited to participate in the group. I was elected chairman of that group to give it some kind of independent focus where I wasn't necessarily involved in service delivery but had a long association with the valley.

We have worked from June 2003 until now on a whole range of things. It has really focused on what services we currently have, is this going to add to or take away from what we have? We are of the firm view that we want to add to what we have in the valley currently. The membership of the group obviously was heavily involved with CETCH so they've had at least five members of the group right throughout and we have had good communication with them. They have run Huon Open Learning. I am a little amazed at the letter from Liz Smith that somehow they perceive there has been no discussion or consultation with them when the chairman of both Huon Open Learning and CETCH sits on our committee and is available to take back all the information. I have made specific visits also to discuss what we're doing and what we're planning. We have had extensive discussions with Huon Open Learning about whether or not they would like to occupy the building and run their other services beyond VET in Schools. I guess that is ongoing but there was certainly lots of discussion about all of that and I'm happy to take questions.

In recent times CETCH has written to the reference group and basically said they were more than happy with the proposal as submitted by the reference group. There were a couple of provisions they wanted, which were based around the original concept proposal - which we believe we have faithfully adhered to - and they revolve around having somebody employed by the Government to be the coordinator and strong community input into the projects and policies of the building. They are the key parts, including the VET in Schools. From the reference group's perspective, we think this process really does add to what we have in the valley. We think it is a good outcome in that we can bring other services together. It is certainly a little bit ahead of the field and we have some work to do in putting together the advisory board and making sure it works, writing the job description and making sure we have the right person as the coordinator. There are a lot of things still to do but we feel that, given the membership of the group and the people we have had involved, we have had wide community input. We have not physically gone out and advertised the fact that we're doing it. There has been wide community consultation previously. Once you identify the need - and there was a need identified for further education and training facilities - our job has been to get out there and make it happen. I think once we have it there it will not be very difficult to sell the benefits and services and make sure it is occupied.

The Committee questioned the witnesses regarding the process for involving stakeholders of the proposal. Mr Langford responded:-

I have talked to Chris White, who did the proof-of-concept proposal and presented a report ... he basically visited anybody and everybody he thought would be interested in training - right through from forestry to fish farms, every single provider in the valley that currently runs a course, whether it was the university, TAFE, Huon Open Learning, all the schools. He basically did the rounds of everybody and got their

thoughts on the process. That is where he went and came back and said, 'Okay. Everybody thinks we need to progress this issue'.

The Committee enquired as to whether the Huon Valley Council had been involved in the consultation process. The following exchange occurred:-

Ms GASKELL - Council has a representative on the reference group that Garry chairs.

Mr LANGFORD - Yes. So they have direct involvement in group. How many times have I talked to you, Geoff? How many times have I talked to the Huon Council?

Mr STURGES - You have answered my question. Thank you.

Ms GASKELL - I have discussed it a number of times too.

Mr COCKERILL - Our manager of community development, Daniel Smee, has also participated. It is interesting that Councillor Smith has not discussed this submission with council in any shape or form, nor has she asked any questions or raised the issue in council.

Mr STURGES - Okay. Conversely then I am assuming that the council representative has been providing either verbal or written reports to council through the process of consultation?

Mr COCKERILL - As far as the consultation process is concerned, I am not really sure why council should be involved in that. We are a player without doubt in the community and there was a communication process and a representation process set up which we have participated in. The council does not deliver educational services.

Mr STURGES - I am sorry, but I would have thought that the Huon Valley Council would be a key stakeholder in the consultative and communication process with the plans for \$2.5 million building in their municipality.

Mr COCKERILL - That is not what I am saying, Graeme.

Mr STURGES - I am just making the point that in the evidence given this morning we were initially told that there were 50 stakeholders in the community - key people in the community. I assume the Huon Valley Council would be a key stakeholder in the development of the building, the plans for the building, the utilisation of the building and a councillor has seen fit to raise with this committee that she contends that there has been inadequate, ineffective consultation and communication with her so on that basis I raise the matter today to get further information regarding the consultative process.

CHAIR - And I think to get that into context too if I read correctly what Graeme is seeking to do is to either give substantiation to what Councillor Smith is saying or indeed rebut what she is saying -

Mr STURGES - Correct.

CHAIR - so it is appropriate that we go down that path with those questions and satisfy ourselves as a committee. Mr Gourlay, you had something to add relating to this.

Mr GOURLAY - Hopefully I can clarify council's involvement to some extent and that is certainly a dialogue at officer level involving the general manager and ourselves. The general manager was also involved in the initial exploration of options - site options and concept options - and was party to the decision making on the preferred site. It is fair to say that, as we went through - and this is certainly my understanding - we provided the general manager with copies of some of the iterations of sketch plans as they emerged and that you, Geoff, briefed your council as they firmed up. There is a clear understanding that council were briefed by the general manager at various stages.

Mr COCKERILL - Whilst it has only been listed once or twice as an official agenda item, the councillors, as a council body as well as the mayor and a number of councillors, have been briefed on this project in its entirety all the way through. Councillor Smith often is at odds with council in relation to consultation and council's decisions.

Mr LANGFORD - Can I add something to that?

CHAIR - Certainly.

Mr LANGFORD - I find it a little incredulous given that Councillor Liz Smith, who is involved with CETCH, is on the committee. The majority of the members in the reference group are involved with CETCH so there has been strong feedback. It is interesting to note that since CETCH have, as a group, formally supported the reference group's approach to say that we have done all these things, we specifically discussed the consultation issue at a recent meeting of the reference group because CETCH had raised it and we went through all the things we have done and all the ways and means and at the end of that everybody was satisfied that the consultation process that had been undertaken was effective at the valley level.

I don't believe anything has changed. That has clearly been effective. We have spoken to everybody who we think we should do. Anybody who has asked we have spoken to them. I have spoken to a number of councillors and they are quite aware of what is going on. If there was some issue I think this should have been raised with the reference group, which it was through CETCH at our last meeting, and was dealt with in the minutes of the meeting and we will talk about that.

CHAIR - Garry, at the outset of your evidence, if I recall, you mentioned CETCH of very recent time have indicated their excitement or agreement - if not excitement - to move, to re-locate.

Mr LANGFORD - It is a set-up where CETCH is the committee, Huon Open Learning is the service provider managed by CETCH. So they are two entities in some degree and they are slightly separate. But CETCH negotiated with Huon Open Learning for occupying the space and they made that commitment some time ago but I guess negotiation has been ongoing about a whole range of things and they are still ongoing. That's clearly not resolved. But on the CETCH side there is absolutely no doubt that they wrote minutes, I have been to meetings and talked to them, we have made ourselves available for every single level of consultation we could have done and that, unfortunately, doesn't reflect what has transpired, in my view.

Mr STURGES - That is all I was attempting to do: to get on record the process that has been undertaken because whether we like it or not we are working our way through the democratic process and a councillor has made some claims and I have merely sought to flesh out those claims and get some information on the record in relation to your point of view, so thank you.

Mr COCKERILL - Could I just add one other thing, as part of council's budget we have allocated \$200 000 for works in Skinner Drive. Councillor Smith was part of council and approved those works.

Mr GOURLAY - Just to reinforce that, as part of the evidence submitted, appendix 7 is actually a copy of a letter from the council of 12 March this year confirming that at its meeting on 10 March it considered the plans as submitted and endorsed those plans and raised a number of points. The concerns expressed in Councillor Smith's letter are not represented here at all or raised in that letter so they obviously weren't of a concern or she may not have been part of that meeting.

Mr COCKERILL - She was part of that meeting.

Mr GOURLAY - She was part of a meeting so those concerns weren't identified at that stage. We have confirmatory letter from each of the key players in this building signing off that they are happy with their aspect of the plan and the building so that is on record.

Alternative siting of the facility

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to why the rear of the Huon Valley Council building was not considered an appropriate site for the development. The witnesses responded:-

Mr FLOYD - Two reasons: one it wasn't big enough and this other site that we have selected has much better exposure and it is a better site.

Mr LANGFORD - There is very little opportunity for expansion once we build and here we have nowhere to go.

Mr FLOYD - Building over sewer lines and high-voltage powerlines as well.

Mr GOURLAY - A lot of constraints in infrastructure. I've just been reminded by my colleague that there are four different titles involved with that little section of land, so it would have been quite a complicated and convoluted piece of land to resolve ownership of, I suspect, or gain single title to.

Mr GOURLAY - It would have taken half the car park behind this building.

Mr COCKERILL - Can I just say from council's perspective it was not an acceptable location. The council owns the land behind the hall and it wouldn't have been an acceptable location to us because it didn't allow the whole complex to develop.

Finance

Mr Gourlay made the following submission in relation to the financial aspects of the project:-

... The estimated cost of the complex has escalated over time, not just because of the recent cost escalation, which I am sure everyone is aware of, but because of the growth of the building to incorporate all the different user groups and the increase in the size of the building is a result of that. The current estimated cost is \$2.6 million and we're intending to go to tender early next month, subject to the approval of this committee.

The source of the funds for this project, as indicated earlier, the Commonwealth initiated the potential to proceed with this project in planning with the allocation of a grant of \$547 000. Initially that was to be matched with money from the State Government and the commitment was made but, as the project has grown, obviously the budget has grown and that commitment from the State Government has similarly had to be expanded. The source of the funds for the balance of the project cost is intended to be from asset sales that the department has at its disposal or has received as a result of sale of facilities and assets that are surplus to requirements.

To balance the books with the two major tenants coming in, the other government tenants - Service Tasmania and Centrelink - an assessment has been undertaken on not only the cost of their share of the building but an evaluation by a registered valuer of an economic rent for those sections of the building. There is now an agreement existing between those two government departments as to the rent they will pay. Although we haven't entered a lease yet - it will be finalised subject to approval - there is a good return on the asset sale funds invested for the department. The financial information page, appendix 2, provides a synopsis of the return on the investment and shows that there is a break-even plan for the Department of Education on this project after 7.46 years. In fact, over a 20-year period the department will fully recover its funds invested on this project - fully recover the total cost of the complex. It is proposed that

the return on the investment of the asset sales money will be directed towards the department's minor works and essential maintenance projects. So schools and colleges will benefit from the ongoing income stream generated by the rental of this facility. These rentals do represent marginally above-market returns for commercial buildings, so I think it is a good deal for the department and the beneficiaries will be the schools and colleges and the future minor works programs.

Huon Valley Council

Mr Cockerill made the following submission on behalf of the Huon Valley Council:-

I want to talk about this project as it impacts on the community and council. As I said, the council strongly supports the project, and we have worked very closely with the parties in developing this and bringing together all of the parts of it, in particular the encouragement of the Centrelink component of it and how that dovetails into council's needs for accommodation and the like. I think it is fair to say that we have been - sometimes actively, sometimes passively - lobbying for a new library within Huonville for in excess of 20 years, I think, and so there are a number of the components that the community have been looking for over a number of years - a new online centre, a good shop frontage for the business enterprise centre, and, as I said, removing Centrelink offices and Service Tasmania from our building. As well there are the educational rooms and facilities which will be available through this project and the retention of the court facilities. Council has been working on a civic precinct for a number of years, and this fits absolutely within this concept.

So in the late 1960s, the court building and the police building were constructed, and that was probably the first stage or the genesis of the civic precinct. In 1994, when the Centrelink building, as we call it, was built it was another stage. Then the construction by the State Government of the new community health centre in 2003 was another part of the jigsaw. We saw that this redevelopment of the justice part of the building and the construction of the LINC facility would create a further keystone in locating public facilities in this civic precinct.

... We undertook (a value management) process in conjunction with the State Government in June 2003, in partnership with DIER and the community. That, I suppose, was inclusive of a large range of stakeholders - transport operators, business operators, government departments, community representatives, council itself, council officers, DIER. So it is a recognised process of developing a strategy for a town. The outcomes of the VMS that relate particularly to Sale Street and Skinner Drive are that it was recognised that Skinner Drive ought to be extended to link up with the Channel Highway in order that the people from Cygnet in particular can drive into the centre of Huonville, into this civic precinct, which will allow them to visit the community health centre, the council, Service Tasmania, the library, online and things like this. They can actually come in without having to go through the deficient junction of the Huon Highway and the Channel Highway at the bridge, which is a really difficult junction, so there was that linkage. It was also to enable a better flow of traffic in and around the town, because at the moment if you are going down the street you have an opportunity to

turn at the roundabout but if you go further south there are no real opportunities to turn to come back, so it made it a loop.

The other thing that was identified was that there ought to be a bus transit centre established in the vicinity of where the LINC building is going to be, in actual fact on the council land that is owned and is currently being developed as a carpark there. The reason for that is that over many years we have had problems with bus depots and bus stops within the main street for the normal passenger traffic as well as the school buses, so it was determined that that is an ideal location to develop a transit station. That will focus all bus movements, including school buses, into the transit centre for reasons of safety et cetera. So that part will be developed by council as part of the car parking facilities and the redevelopment of Skinner Drive. The other outcome they wanted was the development of additional car parking spaces at the rear of the commercial premises in Huonville. We have already developed one carpark and the car parking that goes towards this project will also go towards assisting with car parking for commercial premises.

What is council's commitment to this project? In this 2004-05 budget we have committed \$200 000 to the redevelopment of Skinner Drive, which is the frontage of this building, and also to the development of car parking for it. It is anticipated that council may reduce the car parking requirements for the development, recognising the adjacent facilities which we are about to develop there. That is also a significant contribution by council towards this project. In future years, Sale Street itself - from the roundabout through the precinct - will have to be redeveloped. It will need to have traffic-calming facilities to ensure easy pedestrian access between the library, the LINC building, the Community Health Centre, council offices, public hall and things like that. We will have to totally redevelop Sale Street but council are aware of the need to do that and that will be factored into their future capital works program.

In relation to the utilisation of the Centrelink office space, we have touched on that. Our council has been housed in inadequate offices since amalgamations. We had three councils amalgamate into one. We have grown substantially since 1993 and these offices are substandard. We have overcrowding in a number of offices, we lease additional office space in the main street, so by taking these facilities over it allows us to integrate our office sections back together and hopefully it will provide some productivity gains for council. Centrelink currently have one year to run on their lease - I think it expires on 1 May next year - but I am sure council will be able to negotiate a minor extension to them at the rental levels that have been negotiated for the new building.

As a summary of where council stands on this, we feel that it has sufficient beneficial impacts for the residents of the Huon Valley - not just Huonville, but the whole valley. It certainly builds on the civic precinct that we've been trying to form. It gives the community a new public library and a new online centre, which is something, as I said, the community has been wanting for generations now. An important issue is that it locks Centrelink and Service Tasmania into Huonville and servicing the Huon Valley, via a long-term lease with the State Government. As a community, we have often feared that Centrelink may have withdrawn their services from the valley, particularly since they

have withdrawn them from Kingston in the last two or three years. From a community point of view, locking them into servicing the valley is really important.

It provides an adequate court facility, which will also ensure that court facilities remain in the Huon Valley. Our recalcitrant residents at times only have to travel to Huonville, rather than having to travel to Hobart to be dealt with. It really is an issue in relation to public transport, because we suffer very badly through poor public transport. There is no doubt that it will enhance the learning facilities within the Huon Valley, assist in addressing retention rates and the like and give enhanced educational opportunities for our youth. It will provide an excellent shopfront for the business enterprise centre, which does some really good work in relation to promoting economic development. It will focus council's works on implementing the recommendations of the value management study for parking and street redevelopment and I think it locks council into achieving those. It will facilitate the concentration of bus movements in Huonville, and that has some significant safety benefits.

I think it is fair to say, and to add to what Tim said, it is an innovative solution to address the needs of our community. Bringing together the parties has been a major achievement. I think it is also a pretty good example of how the Federal Government, the State Government, the council and the community can work together. I think small communities like the Huon Valley are better at doing it than larger ones. By sharing the infrastructure in this project, I think the community will enjoy benefits over a long term. The council strongly supports the project for all the benefits it will bring to the communities in the Huon Valley and we strongly suggest that your committee supports it and approves the project.

DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- Department of Education submission;
- Garry Langford, Chair Huon Valley Learning Reference Group; and
- Councillor Liz Smith, Huon Valley Council

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Huon LINC (Learning and Information Network Centre) project offers a new and innovative service initiative for Tasmania which reflects a philosophy of lifelong learning for a regional community.

The Committee is confident that the integration of education, training and information services in this facility will ensure a more efficient delivery of programs for the residents of the Huon Valley, with particular emphasis on clients beyond the compulsory years of schooling. The co-location with Centrelink, Service Tasmania

and the Business Enterprise Centre is a logical and potentially beneficial arrangement for users of the facility.

The Committee was impressed with the level of community consultation and involvement in the development of the concept.

The Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted, at an estimated total cost of \$2,600,000.

Parliament House
HOBART
4 November 2004

Hon. A. P. Harriss M.L.C.
CHAIRMAN