

To the Public Accounts Committee / to whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my opposition to the development of a stadium at the Mac Point site.

I have lived in Hobart all my life, most while based on the edge of the CBD, and while not opposed to progress, I am against the implementation of unnecessary and overpriced infrastructure which will be detrimental to the liveability of the city I call home. Hobart has a unique ambiance which also acts as a significant selling point with regards to tourism. I believe this to be worthwhile of protection.

My personal view on AFL is immaterial except to note that not only is AFL not followed by all Tasmanians, but it is also disproportionally supported in terms of finance and advertising when compared to other sports.

Any development of Mac Point should take into account public opinion, as well as viable alternatives for the site relating to the State's more urgent areas of expenditure, such as health, housing, and education. The state government has a responsibility to the Tasmanian people to act in their best interests. I fail to see how the wanton destruction of Hobart's cultural heritage and historic sites over committing funding to initiative vital to survival and wellbeing should be considered in Tasmania's best interest. Those people who believe there are more important things to focus on than sport should not be forced to financially contribute to such a foolish expenditure, particularly in the current economic climate.

With regard to the Terms of Reference:

ToR 1: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: matters related to the Club Funding and Development Agreement (Agreement) signed between the Crown in the Right of Tasmania and Australian Football League

The AFL is not an appropriate body to determine Mac Point as an appropriate site for a stadium. Full consultation with regard to city planning should be done by those considered experts in their field lest a proposed construction cause immeasurable detrimental consequences to the city and its inhabitants. What right does the AFL – as a corporate body – have to lay claim to public land and demand sole rights to its usage? There are alternative options for sporting infrastructure that have not been considered because AFL 'want' the Mac Point site – a site to which they are *not* entitled to claim.

In the AFL proposal, the financial burden of the stadium is disproportionately placed on Tasmania and not the AFL itself. Similarly, the AFL absolves itself of any risks related to the proposal. This is unacceptable, especially where the proposed costs of this project have been severely understated.

ToR2: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: the suitability of Macquarie Point as the site for a proposed the Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct

The Mac Point site is blatantly unsuitable for a construction of such magnitude as the proposed stadium. The area is a major heritage site which should be protected rather than exploited to destruction. Much of Hobart's appeal lies in its heritage areas, and as such, their conservation should be of significant importance when considering any form of development. This has obviously not been done in the creation of the stadium proposal. Public perception of these facts is evidenced by the work and support of the 'Hobart Not Highrise' group.

Extensive and costly adaptation of the area would be required to enable construction, during which time – as well as post construction – there will be a considerable negative impact on traffic flow and congestion in the CBD. The required effort to enact this proposal will result only in gaining more and widespread problems as well as a visual eyesore. Not only is the site clearly not fit for purpose, but the stadium also contravenes the current planning scheme. This latter fact alone should be enough to remove the proposal from contention.

ToR 3: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: the financial risks associated with the Agreement.

As stated, the costs involved with the stadium have been severely understated in an attempt to gain support for a costly and unnecessary infrastructure development. Said costs are also to be born not by the AFL (a multi-million-dollar corporation) but by the Tasmanian government and by extension, the Tasmanian people. The State has more important areas which require funding than an unnecessary, unfit stadium that will be underused and thus show no value for money. Sporting entertainment should not be considered a more important expenditure than health, housing, and education. We do not need sporting entertainment to survive.

The stadium proposal is not financially viable and involves significant financial risk to Tasmanian taxpayers; taxpayers who have not signed up for, and do not wish to be party to, such irresponsible spending, particularly in the current economic climate.

ToR: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: matters related to the financing and delivery of the entire proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct

Further to the financial risks inherent in this underthought project proposal, are the additional infrastructure costs required to upgrade the surrounding area and compensate for increased traffic and transportation needs. There are alternative development options for the Mac Point site which should be considered, many – if not all – of which will have a far less destructive effect on the surrounding area.

No consideration has been made to include in the stadium proposal the additional 'real' costs associated with its construction. Significantly, costs related to public infrastructure to integrate the stadium site with the city, traffic congestion on four major road networks (Macquarie St, Davey St, Brooker Hwy, Tasman Hwy), disruption during the construction phase relating to noise, waste, and congestion, and even the value of the Mac Point land itself, have not been included in the proposal. With increased population and changes to road networks, traffic conditions in Hobart are already at capacity. Introducing years' worth of construction will increase these problems tenfold.

Current economic conditions should also be taken into account. More than 50 'high risk' infrastructure projects have been pulled nationally due to 'undeliverable' costs. How is the proposed stadium any different? Why should this project receive 'special treatment' and not be subject to the same scrutiny of any other government infrastructure project? Especially, when the Tasmanian government is taking on the financial burden and risks. The stadium proposal should be included amongst those projects that "do not demonstrate merit, lack any national strategic rationale and do not meet the Australian government's national investment priorities" and to do otherwise would be fiscally and ethically irresponsible.

ToR 5: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: the future of Blundstone Arena and UTAS Stadium

Tasmania is already in possession of two other appropriate stadium venues (Blundstone Arena and UTAS Stadium) that can be utilised for the State's sporting entertainment needs. The addition of a third – also tipping the balance between the north and south of the state – is unnecessary. Due to the proposed stadium being unfit for non-AFL purposes, it would be severely underutilised and, as such, would act as a significant financial loss to the State. The frequency of usage stated with regard to AFL games has also been overstated and is an unreliable estimate of actual use. Thus, this should be disregarded as an appropriate metric.

Various justified upgrades to pre-existing venues have already been undertaken. This expenditure was appropriately investigated prior to being implemented and justification for the contribution of public funds was achieved. No such respectable process would obtain the same result for the proposed Mac Point stadium. The continued use of the aforementioned pre-existing venues, and their economic viability, should also be taken into account as reasons against the Mac Point stadium proposal. Should said venues require any further upgrades, these costs should be considerably less, thus incurring far less economic impact than the construction of an entirely new venue.

ToR 6: To inquire into and report upon the Tasmanian Government's process into the proposed Arts, Entertainment and Sports Precinct in Hobart with a particular emphasis on: any other matter incidental thereto.

It is imperative that appropriate consultation is conducted with *all* stakeholder groups due to the significance of the Mac Point area prior to any proposal being accepted and undertaken. Similarly, said consultation should be conducted in an entirely above-board and transparent manner. This is especially important considering the disproportionate levels of funding and infrastructure investment received by AFL compared to all other sports combined.

Projects of this nature should be judged on merit and community impact rather than following a trend of pandering to corporations which feel entitled to make unilateral decisions due to the amount of money they have. Nor should the creation of a Tasmanian AFL team be reliant on the destruction of the cultural heritage of Hobart; to do so is tantamount to public extortion.

The Tasmanian public should also be considered as significant stakeholders in decisions surrounding the development of Mac Point. Any development in this area will have a considerable effect on the day-to-day living of the inhabitants of Hobart. Further to this, the opinion of the public should be appropriately acknowledged and taken into account before any decisions are made, rather than blatantly ignored and the consultation process reduced to utter farce.

I urge the Committee to strongly consider the points outlined in this and other submissions against the Mac Point stadium proposal.

Kind regards,

Bonnie Jones Dobson

