

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN
THE HUON VALLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, HUONVILLE ON FRIDAY,
15 OCTOBER 2004**

HUON LINC DEVELOPMENT

Mr GARRY LANGFORD, CHAIR, HUON VALLEY LEARNING REFERENCE GROUP; **Ms SIOBHAN GASKELL**, DIRECTOR, LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; **MR TIM GOURLAY**, MANAGER FACILITY SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; **MR BRAD WHEELER**, PROJECT OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, **MR ANDREW FLOYD**, ARCHITECT, PHILIP LIGHTON WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Thank you very much to all of you and thanks for meeting with us over on the site so that we could gain a bit of appreciation of how the existing Magistrate's Court is going to be reused with the redesign of the building. We were also able to gain some appreciation of the new building and how it will sit on the site. So Tim, are you going to lead your evidence?

Mr GOURLAY - Thanks, Mr Chairman. We thought that Siobhan Gaskell would lead.

CHAIR - The prime tenant.

Ms GASKELL - Just to recap, the department comprises school education, adult and community education, libraries and online access centres. The vision that we are working to, that the ministers 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. As Tim mentioned when we were on site, 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.

Just briefly touching on consultation, because I think that probably is an issue that needs to be discussed in more depth, we had a consultant engaged early on to look at the proof of concept for the LINC. That involved over 50 stakeholders, both individuals and groups. The Huon Valley Learning Reference Group, that Garry is the chair of, was then established out of that to oversee the LINC proposal. That has a range of representatives on it from the department, the council, business enterprise centre, TAFE, the access centre, as well as community reps. Garry is one of those community representatives on the group.

The plans that we have lodged reflect an extensive period of discussion between stakeholders in that proposal to try to find the best building solution.

I might stop there, Tim, for you to go into the detail of the building.

Mr GOURLAY - Seventeen sketch plans, some of which had versions A, B or C, speaks volumes really about the evolution of this building and the concept, and their refinement and development over a period of some 12 months. As Siobhan indicated, scores of people representing a variety of groups in the valley have been involved and consulted over a period under the auspices of the project steering committee, which has been chaired both by Nick Evans, Director of OPCET with the Department of Education and Siobhan more recently. I, too, would reinforce the fact that in terms of consultation there has been ample negotiation and ample opportunity for any group with an interest in this proposal to come forward, voice their interest and in fact be part of the planning process.

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 has a number of shortcomings and was 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.

I have some more to say a bit later on about the financials and the costings but I might ask of Mr Langford has something to say about the consultative process.

CHAIR - What we might do is take questions as we go. Mr Best has some of which he wants to raise straightaway.

Mr BEST - Yes, I am really interested. I think it is a wonderful project. I think there are a couple of really interesting things about the project. One is the fact that you have this courtroom in the middle of a learning centre. I find that interesting that you have people who have obviously done the wrong thing coming in to a learning centre - and I am just interested in that concept. That is the first part of the question and maybe I will just leave it at that because I have some other things.

Mr GOURLAY - 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 -

Mr BEST - It is accessible, though, isn't it? It reaches people in a way that perhaps you wouldn't reach because they are coming there for something they don't really want to be there for, but there is all this information -

Mr STURGES - It's like going to the headmaster's office.

Mr BEST - Yes, for information.

Ms GASKELL - They 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.

Mr BEST - I think it is a positive in a lot of ways.

Ms GASKELL - We will see.

Mr BEST - I notice that you are going to redecorate. You are going to redevelop the courtroom, too, so I am not sure how that's going to look or what you anticipate there.

Ms GASKELL - 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 BEST - Garry, you are head of the group, the Huon LINC, or the consultative committee?

Mr LANGFORD - Yes - the Huon Valley Learning Reference Group we call it. It's a little complicated.

Mr BEST - It is, yes. We have heard from the department about the site, that this is the best site and I accept that. I guess it was deemed that you were trying to co-locate these services. Perception is really important in the community, especially with young people, and it was thought, I suppose, that that is the thing to do as opposed to, say, locating it on a school site because the department has moved towards trying to get everything into schools and this is moving away from that, in a sense. It would have been a heavy topic of discussion, I would imagine.

Mr LANGFORD - The original concept talked about bringing together more than just the education and training approach to the library. It is 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.

Mr BEST - How do you see the community aspect for young people, say, at Cygnet and Huonville; will they see this as something that they can easily walk into and feel comfortable? They are not in the bus going to school but that will continue over into this facility. How does that momentum, I suppose -

Mr LANGFORD - It's a good question. I guess 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.

I guess the key part of it is the employment of the coordinator and through the Education department and we have a commitment for that to be provided.

Mr BEST - That will encourage young people because you have your business development and that sort of thing, so that will encourage them to come through the door. I imagine you could have displays and all sorts of things.

Mr LANGFORD - We are going to work that in with the library. The library also gives us an opportunity because the library has themes at particular times during the year, so we are able to use that to build on the process. So from a community aspect, I think it is good value for money and it gets the things into places where we need them.

Mr STURGES - I would like to flesh out a couple of comments in relation to the hub for the provision of service to the regional areas. I will call it a 'hub', or do you call it a 'node'?

Laughter.

Mr STURGES - Firstly, let me say in exploring this that I really applaud the concept; I think it is a great concept to co-locate the provision of services under the one roof. I note that you are talking about coordinating services to Dover, Geeveston, Cygnet and other areas within the region. Siobhan, you spoke about the use of video link. The first question: would you be using technology to hook up a video link with these regional areas over time? I understand that resources are a key factor in all these considerations. The second question would be about the use of wireless technology or some other form of telecommunication technology to link up the computer networks from the hub, so that classes could be held simultaneously in Huonville, Dover, Geeveston and Cygnet. Is that the sort of thinking for the future, or for now for that matter?

Ms GASKELL - 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 - If I could add one other thing, 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 coordinator will run courses. They are not there to do that; they are not a service

provider in that sense. They are there as a coordinator and to facilitate. It is a key component.

Mr BEST - What is the department's commitment for that coordinator role? Is it committed, full-time and into the future, not just see how it goes and then volunteers?

Ms GASKELL - No, 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.

Mr BEST - Andrew, the courtroom design, is that yours?

Mr FLOYD - Yes, that will be mine. 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 18 days that the court is not in session. We anticipate the dais may stay there but that is to be resolved.

Mr BEST - With the colours, it is a learning area, is it not, so what happens? It is not going to look like a courtroom when people are using it for learning are they?

Mr FLOYD - 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.

Mrs NAPIER - I think it is a very good concept and makes sense in terms of the region bringing resources together. In terms of the appointment, will the community have a say about who might be appointed and what is the process envisaged there?

Ms GASKELL - Yes. 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.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay. In relation to the capacity of the areas that are designated to be useable for education and training, I accept that what we are talking about is that education and training will also occur within the Magistrates Court when it is not being used, but I was looking at the area designated with work stations in it. The training hours that have increased down here are fantastic but are we sure that this has sufficient space in which learning can occur and also handle any increase in growth? Presumably a lot of adult education will be going on there too.

Ms GASKELL - 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.

Mrs NAPIER - Looking at the number of console stations you have separate from the online access centre - which is more people coming in and out - how many would you have in the existing centre?

Ms GASKELL - Again, we haven't gone into the specifics and I wouldn't take from this diagram that those are actually fixed locations. Again, 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.

Mrs NAPIER - Using Bluetooth?

Ms GASKELL - Yes, 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.

Mrs NAPIER - Looking at the interface between the library and the online access centre, increasingly libraries are about using information technology to assist people to access it. Then you also have the printing capacity and so on. I accept what you are saying in that

the internal facilities in that library space aren't fixed as such, but it did not seem to have much of a focus on technology in the design that is there.

Ms GASKELL - Again, 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.

Mrs NAPIER - So you would envisage that the computers within the education and training area are owned by the centre, full stop?

Ms GASKELL - Yes.

Mrs NAPIER - You would have a number of mobile computers that could be taken for use within the library or in the education and training area?

Ms GASKELL - Yes. You may have one or two fixed ones within the library simply to be looking up and placing holds on the library catalogue and the like, and equally for other uses of the Internet - e-mail or whatever it is - that concern the access centre role. Again, I would say the coordinator's role is to allocate the resource across those areas because inevitably within the library there are quiet times that you can predict and you may have a person who is straddling between the library and the access centre simply because it is a quiet time. In peak times you may well have two or three running, but I think it is very much the role of the coordinator, in that early period, to sort through things like the equipment provision and the staffing provision and how they all interact.

Mrs NAPIER - One of the reasons I asked that question was that I thought a major focus of educational training would probably be in that area where the consoles are. I thought that was a limit because if you wanted to try to expand that you would end up having to come out in front of the police building and that would restrict the opportunity for any future expansion of the building. I just wondered why the library and that console had been put on the right because I would have thought it would be better to put them over where the Centrelink bit is because you have better proximity to your tutorial rooms; Centrelink could be over where the library is because that is less likely to require expansion and can be more of a complete area. There are probably some reasons for it, so that is why I have asked the question.

Mr FLOYD - I will respond, Sue, and say that 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.

Mr BEST - It is starting to look more like a node than a hub.

Mr FLOYD - 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 -

Mrs NAPIER - Sorry, down the plan or up the plan?

Mr FLOYD - Down the plan - the green section towards the bottom.

Mr LANGFORD - Down. Off this way.

Mr FLOYD - We have had a number of discussions about the likely size of the library in the future and we have been advised that it is unlikely to extend beyond the 200 square metres, so from that perspective we have allowed this expansion to occur. It does not necessarily have to be that the computers - shown up in the top right-hand corner for

education and training - need to be like that. They could be laptops delivered on mobile trolleys or whatever.

Mrs NAPIER - I would imagine that a lot of learning is not done tutorial style, it is done when you come in individually and you have someone there to give you a bit of assistance - one person studying mathematics, another person studying gardening and another doing neuroscience or whatever. I can see the advantage of having a facility that is semi-supervised and has a focus on an individual learning facility, but it just looks a bit small to me for what the teaching demand might be, particularly taking into account your training hours. I guess that is why I was asking the question about expansion.

Mr BEST - This is great, but to me that is not a modern learning centre. We have sectionalised these things, and I understand what you are doing and saying about people coming in. You will probably want to put me on the first bus out of here because the next thing I am going to say is that the best library I have seen is the one at the TAFE college in Devonport - it is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and everything is in the one area; it is not sectionalised. You walk in and it is all computers. If this is what people want, that is fine and I am happy to approve it, but to me it does not look modern in the sense that learning is different to that. It is all together, whereas what you have done is put everything into groups and that bothers me. Fair enough, you have to sectionalise Centrelink and these other things, and I accept that, but I would have thought you would have had just one area with your computers all in there. I know you want people to see that that is a library when they drive past but it is what people get out of it.

Ms GASKELL - What I would suggest is, if you look at the whole right-hand part of the plan and regard that as one space -

Mr BEST - But it is not, though, is it?

Ms GASKELL - No, it's simply because Andrew's put colours on it.

Laughter.

Mr BEST - But it's not though, because you have it off to one side.

Ms GASKELL - But you have to have some capacity to divide space because there will be formal -

Mr BEST - I think you should have a look at the TAFE college in Valley Road.

Ms GASKELL - Okay.

Mr BEST - And then you'll know what I mean. It might not be the right thing for you and you might say, 'No, totally wrong. He shouldn't have come here and said that'. But I think you should look at it before you move ahead.

Ms GASKELL - But this is a combination of the capacity for open space and any classroom-based activity.

Mr BEST - Yes, I know. They did the same there as well, but it is different to that. You walk in and the computers and books are there. Whereas with this, you have books here and computers over there.

Mr FLOYD - Certainly there are computers scheduled to be in the library next to the online access centre, so that when those doors are up you won't know that you're in the online access centre as opposed to the library.

Mr BEST - That is what I mean. It should be just the one thing.

Mr FLOYD - But when the library closes we can't have the online access centre persons wandering into the library and knocking off the hard copy, so there has to be some kind of management control. We have eight different groups in here and somehow -

Mr BEST - So you're going to have unsupervised time, is that what you're saying?

Mr FLOYD - As I understand it, the online access centre -

Mrs NAPIER - Online access centres work like that, though. You can open them 24 hours and you need secure lock-up areas.

Mr LANGFORD - You do have power to separate - that's part of the reason. I think there is probably more detail on the plan. We have drawn things in particular places but maybe we should just say that it is education and training space.

Mr BEST - You have desks in the library, have you?

Mr FLOYD - There will be array of facilities in the library. We probably put the wrong thing on the plan.

Ms GASKELL - We haven't gone into the detail, but I guarantee it will be modern and flexible.

Mr WHEELER - If you imagine those two walls as being at least partially glazed, for example, rather than a solid walls and those computers where they are shown are partly to communicate to people that there is provision of technology, that the whole building will be technological and have that infrastructure involved. I think that presents a different picture to what you are seeing there, if you like, in terms of the plan. It is actually much more integrated and flexible than it appears.

Mr BEST - Well, if that is what the community wants, I am happy to go along with it - I was just interested, that is all.

Mr LANGFORD - The issue was raised about 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.

Mrs NAPIER - The only other question I had arises from looking at that area where the consoles are and the library. What was the reason for not just extending that library wall straight over to connect to the right hand wall? It is the same number of bricks. I accept that it would mean more roof space and more internal space, but I just wonder what reason there was for creating that right angle rather than just squaring up the building.

Mr GOURLAY - A square metre of space, Sue, costs nearly \$2 000 these days and every square metre you add will just have to be multiplied by - I exaggerate a little bit, say \$1 800, \$1 700 - and you have got to end up with a briefed area of size and a building that meets the budget. Yes, I know that looking at that you would say that seems very sensible -

Mrs NAPIER - It is the same number of bricks.

Laughter.

Mr GOURLAY - That is just what the cost is so the project has grown - we will talk about the costing side of it shortly. But it does come down to size and what will work and we are pretty confident we have enough square metres in here to serve all the eight or nine building users that will operate out of this centre.

Mrs NAPIER - But remember I used to be a member of the TCAE down here at Mount Nelson and we had a beautiful triple gymnasium design. They had run out of money so some ning-nong went around and took five metres off three sides and I came back into the dance studio - there was supposed to be a gymnasium and a dance studio - and I said, 'You can get rid of that wall.' They said, 'Why?' And I said, 'Well, you would not be able to run, would you?' There was not enough distance to run, to get up to speed. Sometimes when we bring in cost efficiencies it is not always for the right reason. I guess I raise that one because I am still a little concerned about whether there is a limit - for that area where the computers are shown - for the flexible link to the library and I think that makes a lot of sense. You can get maximum use of the technologies that are

available and so on and minimise your supervision and I just wondered why we would not have seen the value of picking up that extra bit of space.

Ms GASKELL - The computers will also be in these other light green areas.

CHAIR - Just before we go to Mr Hall, who has a question on that matter that Mrs Napier has raised, and if it is a bit of give and take, if there is architectural merit to that setback, I will accept that. If there is better use or more extended space to be gained by doing that, which there is, then maybe it could be taken off the Centrelink area, which seems quite expansive.

Mr LANGFORD - They want more.

CHAIR - Do they? Centrelink want even more than you are suggesting here?

Mr LANGFORD - And they are happy to pay for it. That is not resolved yet but although they have signed off on this plan more recently, Mr Chair, they have come back with further consideration by the various staff and they are in the process I think of asking for a few more square metres which will be at the same rate that they have agreed to pay for the rest of their rental area.

CHAIR - I hear what Mrs Napier is saying. I have a feeling that there is architectural merit in doing what is being proposed there with a setback, given the complexities of melding a range of elevations there.

Mr FLOYD - That is quite true. We have some elevations in with the book and we actually have been thinking about what it is going to look like from the outside and we would prefer to have the setback as part of the design that we have provided. I guess everything is negotiable though, so we could certainly look at that.

CHAIR - Okay. Mr Hall.

Mr HALL - I think the couple of questions that I had have already been answered. I might have missed it in the detail. The existing building where Centrelink are at the moment, what happens to that?

CHAIR - The council takes that back over. We are simply currently asking people -

Mr HALL - Yes, we currently are.

CHAIR - Could we take a moment to introduce Geoff Cockerill, the General Manager. If you would like to come to the table and make the declaration and then you can contribute as you want as we go along. There may be some questions now which relate to the council's operation.

GEOFF COCKERILL, GENERAL MANAGER, HUON VALLEY COUNCIL WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - It maybe now that you have an answer to the question that Mr Hall has just asked about where Centrelink currently are. What happens to the space where they now are?

Mr COCKERILL - Council purchased the buildings four years ago after some negotiations.

Ms GASKELL - That's correct.

Mr COCKERILL - 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.

Mrs NAPIER - A good deal - you got in before the building boom.

Mr COCKERILL - We paid market value for it.

CHAIR - Okay. Is everybody happy if we move on and then come back to Tim because he was going to introduce the next component of the evidence?

Mr STURGES - Sorry, Mr Chairman - I thought Mr Langford was going to talk about the consultation process. Are we going away from that end to the financials now?

CHAIR - No. Tim was getting to the next stage of the submission or the evidence and that may well have led into where Garry was going to move.

Mr STURGES - I will wait until Mr Langford has made his contribution. I just have a couple of questions.

Mr GOURLAY - I am happy to defer and put off the financials, if that is okay with you, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR - That would be great.

Mr GOURLAY - The consultation process is important to the discussions that have taken place, the concept and what have you.

Mr LANGFORD - Obviously my submission was quite brief, but 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 Francis 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.

Mr STURGES - I do say again for the record that I certainly applaud the work that has been done. I think the concept certainly has merit, so I make it quite clear that I frame these questions with a positive frame of mind. I am a little concerned that Councillor Smith has seen fit to make a submission. I would also for the record state that I don't know Councillor Smith nor have I taken the opportunity to communicate with her. Siobhan, I think you indicated that there were some 50 stakeholders initially involved in the consultative process. I note that Mr Langford just said - and I do not consider there is a need - that there wasn't broad advertising within the community. How were these stakeholders selected then? I assume that the stakeholders that we're talking about are groups and individuals within the community. How and who decided who you would consult with?

Ms GASKELL - That was before my time.

Mr LANGFORD - I have talked to Chris White, who did the proof-of-concept proposal and presented a report. I don't have it with me, but 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'.

Mr STURGES - Okay. But again I just want to get this on record because often where you have somebody concerned about consultation it may just be the fact that they have not been properly informed of the extent of the consultative process. What about the Huon Valley Council? Ms Smith as a councillor is saying that really she feels as though the communication/consultation process has been inadequate. Have there been any approaches through the consultative phase to council, either at a council meeting or in written form?

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 in this project on 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 STURGES - Thank you very much, we've kept to that on record.

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.

CHAIR - Okay, thanks. Graeme, thanks for being persistent with that because it is important we have that submission by Councillor Smith. She is unable to be here due to extenuating family circumstances but this discussion would have taken place even if she had been here because it was important to clarify the circumstances of the consultation which has taken place and if people are happy now that we move on, having satisfied ourselves of that.

Mrs NAPIER - Can I just ask one question related to that. One of the issues raised in that letter is why the new development didn't occur basically at the back of this space and can we have on record why it was decided not to pursue that space rather than the Magistrates Court?

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.

Mrs NAPIER - And access to car parking.

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.

Mr GOURLAY - On the financial side of things, I will try to put it into simple terms. 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.

Mrs NAPIER - How does this compare to the rents that the different entities pay up to date?

Mr GOURLAY - Commercial rents are generally commercial-in-confidence and I haven't been able to glean information about specific rentals paid by these organisations in other buildings but we are satisfied that the rentals being paid reflect the fact that this is a brand new, purpose-designed building expressly developed for the purpose of these tenants and they are in the upper percentile of rents paid for commercial buildings.

Mrs NAPIER - So the rent is fairly high?

Mr GOURLAY - That is my belief. I think it is a good deal for the department.

Mrs NAPIER - And from the point of view of the clients, are they happy about the rents and how many have signed up?

Mr GOURLAY - Both Centrelink and Service Tasmania have signed letters of intent, copies of which are included in the document under the appendices.

Mrs NAPIER - They would be used to paying Sydney rents. Actually Hobart rents are pretty horrific too, I must admit.

Mr GOURLAY - Certainly in Huonville I think will set a new benchmark for rental.

Mr COCKERILL - They have been encouraged into this process because they only have a one year lease left on their existing site.

Mr STURGES - Leverage.

Mrs NAPIER - That is quite an interesting trend in terms of trying to maintain ongoing maintenance budgets and I think it is important to do that, but is this the first of a kind or is this a new pattern in terms of derivatives for future budgets?

Mr GOURLAY - It is certainly a very innovative project. We are breaking a lot of new ground to bring this many tenants and players under one roof and we are very excited about that. We have some other examples. Sheffield is probably a good one. We tried to involve Service Tasmania at Sheffield. Negotiations broke down but that was certainly on the cards there. Having successfully achieved this we will see future examples.

I shared this concept with my counterparts in other states at our annual get together last December and they were just blown away. They thought it was an amazing achievement to bring so many different players together. They said, 'In our bigger States we would never have the opportunity to achieve that sort of consensus or agreement on such a

service centre'. It is just a thing with Tasmania being as boutique and manageable as it is, so it is something that has been achieved because of our unique state.

Mrs NAPIER - It is an interesting model, financially and certainly in terms of integrated services that are there. It makes a lot of sense.

Mr GOURLAY - As the general manager has indicated, Centrelink is going to be forced to relocate in the very near future and the project timetable, which hopefully the architect will address in a moment, does dovetail with the termination of their lease in the adjacent facility. They may need to negotiate a couple of weeks but depending on the building time frame.

CHAIR - That is a good introduction to Mr Floyd.

Mr FLOYD - Subject to your approval, we will be cranking up the documentation phrase and would like to have it out in early November to have it through the public tender board and to have a builder arranged prior to Christmas. We think the build time on this job is about 25 weeks, which will allow occupation at the end of May, maybe early June. That is a pretty tight time frame but we are in that position with the resources to do it at the moment, so that is quite good.

CHAIR - Andrew, is there anything else you want to contribute in terms of the architectural design? We have gone across the project as we have proceeded with this inquiry.

Mr FLOYD - The building form has been generated by the tenancies and the linkage of the tenancies and how they come together, and also the size of those tenancies. It has also been somewhat controlled by the existing building fabric. One of the things that we have tried to do is ensure that we have roofs that slope to the outside, so we have eliminated box gutters and various other components that tend to be expensive to construct and provide maintenance issues. The elevations have been developed up and they reflect the landform. It is a fairly large building so we have been able to break up the scale of the building by massing it in a slightly different way from normal. That is one of the reasons I suppose we are fairly beholden to the shape that we have actually got because it blends in and ties in with the elevations that we have produced. The other thing is that this is particularly poor ground that we are building on. We have managed not to have to pile it, but we are actually building a fairly lightweight building that effectively floats on the mud, so the actual construction of the building is fairly lightweight. That is really probably all I want to say.

Mrs NAPIER - Floats on the mud?

Laughter.

Mr BEST - I was okay until you said that.

Mr LANFORD - This one is floating on the mud too, this building.

Mr BEST - Right, okay, I feel better.

Mr COCKERILL - You'll understand if a log truck goes past.

CHAIR - Any questions of Mr Lloyd? Okay, can we then move to you, Mr Cockerill, for anything you want to add from the council perspective?

Mr COCKERILL - Thanks, Mr Chairman. 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.

Mr BEST - Can I just ask what happens to the existing facility?

Mr COCKERILL - Council owns that. We are going to take it over for administration.

Mr BEST - Right.

Mr COCKERILL - 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.

Councillor Smith did mention the value management study that took place here. We undertook that 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.

Mr STURGES - There is a general manager talking.

Laughter.

Mr COCKERILL - 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.

Mrs NAPIER - Could I just come back to the budget. You say that the total capital cost is \$2.6 million, but the construction budget is \$1.175 million which, as I understand it, is what the break-even point was worked out on. Where is the additional money in relation to the capital costs? Is that the cost of buying out Justice?

Mr GOURLAY - Yes, the acquisition cost is part of the \$2.6 million.

Mrs NAPIER - Could you explain the additional funding? How much is that for?

Mr GOURLAY - It's for \$100 000.

Mrs NAPIER - I was just trying to match the \$1.175 million because it says there that no allowances were built in for windows, furnishings, car parking and so on. Is there a separate budget for that?

Mr GOURLAY - We have money for the furniture and fittings. The capital was broken down across the tenancies. The amount of capital work directly attributable to Centrelink and Service Tasmania is \$943 250, as shown in the evidence. For the library, education and training information centre it is \$1.175 million.

Mrs NAPIER - So you have to add up those figures - as described under annex 2 - to come up with the \$2.6 million?

Mr GOURLAY - Yes.

Mrs NAPIER - Add that to the \$1.175 million?

Mr GOURLAY - Yes, plus the fees, furniture and equipment and the land.

Mrs NAPIER - I wasn't totally clear about how you came up with the \$2.6 million.

Mr GOURLAY - It is every cost that's involved in the complete building.

CHAIR - Thank you very much to each of you for being here. I say to Tim and your delegation and everybody involved in putting this submission together, I found it very detailed.

Mrs NAPIER - I think we ought to put him on road construction.

Laughter.

CHAIR - I did mention that earlier over at the Magistrates Court. That is a substantial submission and it didn't leave any stone unturned, from my point of view, for finding information. I appreciate what you have provided for us. Can we also say thanks, Geoff, for the use of the council building and to each of you for facilitating the site inspection this morning.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.