

Hon Rob Valentine
MLC
Chair, Public Works Committee
House of Assembly
Parliament House,
HOBART TAS 7000

Additional information – Burnie Court Complex

Dear Mr Valentine

Thank you for your letter of 11 January 2022 requesting additional information regarding the Burnie Court Complex project at Mooreville Road for the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PSCPW). In response to your questions, I can provide the following information.

Inclusion of Café/Canteen in the Proposed Design

1. Please find attached a revised site plan showing a preliminary option for a potential location for a café/canteen, customer seating and a storage area for the provider, allowing for a walk-in/walk-out lease model to be established at the site that will provide a great opportunity for a new business to establish on the site. The inclusion of a café on site is supported by both the Chief Justice and Chief Magistrate, and the preliminary plan is currently being considered by the Project Control Group overseeing the project. Similar models where a café is situated adjacent, or within close proximity, to a regional court site are common. For example, the Moorabbin Justice Centre in Victoria has a mobile coffee provider situated at the front of the building. Further, in Hobart the café formerly known as the Courthouse Café is located very close to but not on the actual Magistrates Court site (Artisan coffee is located on the corner of Liverpool and Campbell Streets).
2. As discussed during the PSCPW's site visit and public hearing, some judicial officers indicated that the holding and distribution of hot beverages and cutlery on site may pose a security risk. This was when the original design had an internal cafe. To address any safety and security issues, the proposed location of the café/canteen is now close, however external to, the courts building. As noted at the Mooreville Road site, public access to the building will be via a secure front entrance. Screening processes will be in place for any person entering the building, and any food or drink that is able to be brought into the courts building will be managed using similar policies and procedures to those that are already in place for other courts across the State (i.e. no food or drink is permitted in court rooms), which would eliminate any risk to judicial officers and reduce the risk to court staff. Plus, security officers are present in public areas of the building. This level of control is considered to present an acceptable level of risk and, as noted, is in line with the current practice of the other courts within Tasmania.

3. Additionally, locating the café/canteen outside of the secure court building could allow the café/canteen to potentially operate outside of court hours, increasing the flexibility of the service that an operator could provide (ie to cater for staff when they arrive at work rather than only when the courts building is 'open').
4. Staff, court users and support people attending the Burnie courts, on average, range from 50 to 350 per sitting day. While there has been no specific analysis undertaken for the proposed café/canteen onsite to meet this level of demand, a basic desktop analysis suggests that around 30 percent of site attendees may access the café/canteen. While this turnover will be varied, the Department considers this demand volume is low to medium and is confident the proposed design of the café/canteen will be sufficient to meet this demand over the course of a normal sitting day. Further, it is envisaged the cafe will operate like many other small cafes, serving coffee/drink customers quickly, and equally, the food items will be limited to comply with public health requirements for such a facility (eg, sandwiches, toasties, sushi etc) where there is not a full restaurant kitchen.

Impact of Moving the Burnie Court Complex to a Suburban Location

5. The Department recognises that moving the existing court complex out of the Burnie CBD introduces a new location with some impact. However, the Department strongly believes the positives of the move far outweigh any perceived negatives in relation to developing a new modern contemporary court complex that will improve and future proof the administration of justice to the community in north west Tasmania. This is not uncommon in regional areas.

As discussed with the PSCPW, the rationale for the decision to relocate the court complex to Mooreville Road is based on the following key factors:

- continuing to operate the current courts while safely renovating the existing building was not at all possible based on expert advice, due to the presence of friable asbestos within the building fabric of the existing building when further investigations were undertaken;
- there was no alternative site identified within the Burnie CBD that could be utilised to develop the size and needs of the new court complex;
- during the investigations to find an alternative location, the University of Tasmania's Cradle Coast Campus at Mooreville Road became available and was considered an ideal site for conversion of existing buildings. Indeed, it was one of the local Magistrates who alerted the Department to the suitable site. While re-purposing existing buildings is challenging, developing a replacement courts complex at Mooreville Road will result in a large, contemporary standard that could not have been achieved at the present location in the Burnie CBD. Of particular importance is the ground floor access and adherence to modern accessibility standards;
- developing a new courts complex at Mooreville Road is supported by a number of senior members of the legal profession and primary court users, including the Chief Justice and Chief Magistrate, and the Director of Public Prosecutions;
- Judges, Magistrates and court administration staff have been actively and directly involved in the planning and design stage of the project over many months, as have other legal stakeholders including but not limited to Tasmania Legal Aid, the Law Society and the Tas Bar, and all look forward to the delivery

of modern court facilities for judicial officers, court staff, lawyers, court support agencies, parties, witnesses and members of the public across a range of the courts' services.

- the courts service a very broad range of needs, and are not limited to hearing cases in the criminal jurisdiction. Judges and Magistrates have jurisdiction to hear and determine a large range of legal matters, and the proposed new site will provide improved facilities that will replace the existing three courtroom capacity with three new spacious courtrooms plus scope for expansion;
- the extra space and additional buildings at the Mooreville Road site provides the potential for development of a dedicated Justice precinct that could incorporate a whole range of judicial and legal services and operators that would not be possible at the current location in the Burnie CBD;
- locating a regional court complex close to or within a residential area, including schools, is not uncommon, and is a well-accepted and successful model drawn from other states and territories, for example, Ballina in Queensland and Broadmeadows in Victoria;
- the Mooreville Road site is on Crown Land and the Department considers that constructing court facilities on Crown Land is essential to ensure that the independence of the judiciary can be appropriately maintained.

The Department is aware that, by moving the existing court complex out of the Burnie CBD, some people needing to attend the courts who are reliant on public transport may be required to take an additional mode of transport from the CBD to the proposed site. Public transport already operates to, and stops along Mooreville Road, and the Government has committed to increasing bus services to the Mooreville Road site post construction, including a dedicated express bus during the hours required.

It is considered that this development is a once in a generation opportunity with significant positive outcomes by moving to the Mooreville Road site such as providing a modern, best practice, fit for purpose courts complex that will meet the needs of the community well into the future.

The Department has not been required at this stage of the development to conduct any assessment or modelling of the economic impacts of relocating the Burnie Court Complex. However, it is strongly felt that vacation of the existing courts site will provide significant new opportunities for other developments to move into the CBD area and the Department is already aware of strong interest in the site. It is certainly the Tasmanian Government's intention to consult with the Burnie community on any potential future use of the site.

Master Plan

6. There is no requirement for the development of a master plan beyond the development site at this stage. However, given there is additional space and other buildings currently on the Mooreville Road site that will become available, the Department intends to conduct a further planning exercise to determine what other opportunities might exist to co-locate other organisations on the site that could complement the new courts complex. This planning will also include formally engaging with the Commonwealth Government around the potential to build Federal law courts on the site. It is also worth noting that the current arrangements for the existing buildings at the Mooreville Road site include continued occupancy by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Research until at least the end of 2022 and the

Department is mindful of working with the University to ensure their needs can be met over the next few years.

7. In mid-2021 a Department of Health staff member approached the Department of Justice about any potential opportunities for some office space only at Mooreville Road. This is not something that the Department of Justice would consider as the Department not only remains focused on delivering the courts complex as its priority project but that it and any future expansion be a justice precinct.

I would be grateful if you could please distribute these responses to the Committee at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely



Kristy Bourne

Deputy Secretary, Justice and Reform

21 January 2022

Attachments:

- I. Revised site plan showing the preliminary option for a café/canteen at Mooreville Road.