



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Wednesday 3 December 2025**

**REVISED EDITION**







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The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS**

The following answer to a question on notice was given.

#### **No. 14 - Data Centres in Tasmania**

**Mr GAFFNEY question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY**

With reference to Australia's need for data centres growing exponentially as artificial intelligence advances and more critical systems like banking and healthcare go digital. On 12 March 2025 the *Financial Review* reported that approximately 175 new data centres, with a deployable capacity of approximately 3100 MW, will be needed in Australia by 2030.

- (1) How many data centres do you anticipate will be introduced in Tasmania by 2030, and what will be their total deployable capacity?
- (2) Notwithstanding the AI factory in Launceston that was announced by Firmus Technologies on 1 July 2025 in *Pulse Tasmania*, and the New Energy Opportunities Limited data centre in the Burnie CBD as reported in the *Financial Review* on 10 October 2025, are there any other data centre projects anticipated in Tasmania?

#### **ANSWER**

- (1) Mr President, it is not possible to accurately predict the number or capacity of data centres that will be established in Tasmania by 2030, as it will depend on a wide range of interrelated factors, including:
  - availability of suitable sites
  - availability and pricing of energy
  - availability and pricing of water
  - the pace of technological change within data centres
  - commercial demand and investment appetite
  - competition from other jurisdictions
  - suitability of backhaul capacity and latency considerations
  - regulatory and planning approvals
  - workforce capability and skills availability.

In some cases, a single proponent may develop multiple sites; however, this will also be subject to the factors outlined above.

The scale of data centres is highly variable, ranging from relatively small facilities to hyperscale operations, and it is expected that scale will

increase to meet growing demand in areas such as artificial intelligence and high-performance computing. For example, Firmus has signalled plans for large-scale data centre development potentially exceeding 300 MW of capacity, representing a significant investment and substantial infrastructure footprint.

Tasmania is considered an attractive destination for data centre development, with renewable energy being a significant drawcard. However, data centres are fundamentally commercial ventures and their feasibility - both in Tasmania and elsewhere - will ultimately depend on the individual business case of each development, including long-term energy contracts, connectivity and operational costs.

- (2) It is anticipated additional data centre projects may emerge in Tasmania over time. Currently we are aware of proponents such as Firmus, New Energy, and DAME, all of whom are at varying stages of consideration or development.

While several smaller-scale data centres already exist in Tasmania, these are considerably less extensive than the facilities proposed by major proponents such as Firmus.

We believe other proponents are likely to be actively assessing or exploring opportunities in Tasmania which have not yet been publicly disclosed or come to the government's attention.

Furthermore, there is a strong likelihood that additional entrants could be attracted by the national and international visibility of large-scale projects such as Project Southgate (Firmus). This visibility, combined with Tasmania's renewable energy advantage, positions the state as an emerging destination for data centre development.

### **No. 6 - Bass Highway - Wynyard to Marrawah Upgrade**

The following answer to a question on notice was given.

**Ms FORREST question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,  
Mr VINCENT**

[10.08 a.m.]

With regard to the Bass Highway - Wynyard to Marrawah upgrade:

- (1) Can you confirm:
- (a) Details of the total funds expended to date on each component of the project; and
    - (i) details of the total funds expended to date on each component of each project;

- (ii) a breakdown of expended funds related to Australian Government funds;
    - (iii) a breakdown of expended funds related to Tasmanian government funds;
  - (b) the timelines for and amounts of expenditure of the remaining committed federal funds;
  - (c) the timelines for and amounts of expenditure of the remaining committed state funds;
  - (d) the final costs for each component of the works already undertaken as part of this whole works package;
- (2) whether funds committed by the Australian Government have now been released for the 2024-25 financial year;
  - (3) the amount of funds the committed by the state government and how much has been expended and how much remains to be spent;
  - (4) please provide copies of all progress reports provided by the state to the Australian Government required under the agreement since works commenced;
  - (5) all notes on administration as referred to in the agreement; and
  - (6) details of any variations from the original agreed project scope.

**ANSWER**

- (1) Funds expended to date on each component of the project is provided in Table 1, which I intend to table at the conclusion of this answer.
- (2) The 2024-25 funds committed by the Australian Government have been released.
- (3) The Tasmanian government contribution is \$40 million. As at 30 June 2025, \$29.7 million has been spent with a balance of \$10.3 million remaining.
- (4) I intend to table the Australian Government's Monthly Progress Report extract for reporting related to this funding commitment.
- (5) I also intend to table the notes of administration as referred to in the agreement. For reference, these can also be found on the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts website.

- (6) The proposed inclusion of the construction of a heavy vehicle driver rest area at Detention River is the only variation to the original scope for the Bass Highway Marrawah to Wynyard Upgrade project.

The design of the Detention River heavy vehicle driver rest area was completed as part of the heavy vehicle driver rest area funding commitment, with the construction cost of \$1.5 million proposed to be funded from the Bass Highway Wynyard Marrawah corridor program.

The design for the remaining works within the \$100 million combined commitment for the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah upgrade is currently underway, and tendering of a further package of works is expected to be released in mid-2026.

The timing and scope of some of these works may change, subject to discussions currently underway with Circular Head Council on priorities for the Bass Highway between Smithton and Marrawah.

Mr President, I seek leave to table the three pieces of information in answers to question (1), (4) and (5).

**Leave granted; documents tabled.**

### **No. 13 - Hydropower Plants Providing Power to Data Centres**

The following answer to a question on notice was given.

#### **Mr GAFFNEY question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr DUIGAN**

[10.10 a.m.]

- (1) On 20 January 2025, Recharge News reported former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as advocating the development of hydropower plants to provide clean baseload power to data centres.

As noted on the Hydo Tasmania website, work is progressing on the proposed pumped hydro project at Lake Cethana.

Are there any plans to build a data centre near the Lake Cethana dam, near the Workforce Accommodation Facility in Middlesex, or in any of the surrounding areas?

- (2) As reported by Reuters on 20 March 2025, 60 data centres near Washington D.C. in the US suddenly dropped off the energy grid last July in response to a failed surge protector on a high-voltage line. The data centres switched to on-site generators, which was triggered by the implementation of a standard safety mechanism intended to protect computer chips and electronic equipment from damage caused by voltage fluctuations. The exit of these data centres from the grid led to a large surge in excess electricity in the energy grid and put the region at risk of

cascading power outages. The number of similar near-miss events has grown rapidly in the US over the last five years as more data centres come online. Given this example, can the minister please advise:

What measures will be put in place to ensure that Tasmania is not placed at risk of blackouts due to data centre-related voltage swings in the energy grid?

- (3) The 15 October 2021 Planning Assessment document for the Robbins Island Road to Hampshire Transmission Line specifies that "Up to 6 conductors and one communications cable" are planned. Minister, could you please provide the following additional details about this cable:
  - (a) What type of data will it be used to transmit?
  - (b) Will the data be flowing to or from the island, or in both directions?
  - (c) What will be the bandwidth capacity of this communications cable?

#### **ANSWER**

- (1) There are no current plans to establish a data centre at or near the proposed Cethana pumped hydro facility.
- (2) Responsibility for maintaining the stability of the Tasmanian network lies with TasNetworks Pty Ltd, working with the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). Keeping the grid in a stable operating environment, such as dealing with unanticipated changes in frequency and voltage from planned and unplanned changes in generation and load, is very much 'business as usual' activity for these two businesses.

Large connections to the grid, such as by generators or large loads (like data centres) is through the negotiation of a connection agreement with TasNetworks. The connection agreement is the formal contract that governs how a load connects to and uses electricity on the network. It protects both the customer and TasNetworks by clearly defining rights, obligations and technical requirements. For large projects such as hydrogen hubs, wind farms and large data centres, the agreement ensures TasNetworks can plan and deliver the necessary upgrades to transmission (and distribution as appropriate) assets to service the connection. Technical aspects of the performance of the data centres are addressed in the connection agreement.

There is no *a priori* reason to believe that the operations of data centres present any greater risk to the stability of the grid than other large loads, all of which can experience planned and unplanned outages that create system stability issues that TasNetworks and AEMO are well equipped to manage.

The principal means are through the acquisition and deployment of ancillary services by AEMO such as frequency control ancillary support (FCAS) services, and reactive power capability to manage voltage stability issues.

- (3) The communication cable that forms part of the Robbins Island Wind Farm connection is an optical fibre cable within the earth wire. The purpose of the cable is to transmit operational data, including communications, control and electrical protection signals for the Robbins Island and Jim's Plain renewable energy parks. This is two-way information. The capacity of the cable is not specified in the approval documents, but given the purpose of the cable, it would be appropriate to support the operational data flow required for the development.

**TERRORISM LEGISLATION (EXTENSION) BILL 2025 (No. 52)**  
**POISONS AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE PRESCRIPTIONS) BILL 2025**  
**(No. 45)**

**Third Reading**

**Bills read the third time.**

**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT**

**Conduct of Members and Rules of Debate - Project of State Significance**

[10.15 a.m.]

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, before we move on to our next orders of the day, I would like to make a short statement regarding the conduct of members, the rules of debate and related matters, just to remind our older members and make it clear to our newer members, and to remind myself also, of the practices of this Chamber.

It goes without saying that the subject matter of this motion which the Council will be debating shortly has caused many strong and opposing views to be expressed by many in our electorates and across the Tasmanian community.

This is a project that should have united the state, but unfortunately because of the way it has been handled, it has caused division - not just in the state but even within families. Whatever the outcome, there will be those pleased and those not, and we must be respectful of all.

Likewise, members in this Chamber who represent their communities are here to make laws for the peace, order and welfare of the State of Tasmania. We will have differing and strongly held views on the subject matter of the motion.

However, it's entirely reasonable that all members should expect to be able to express their opinions and the views of their communities and various stakeholders while they have the call, without undue and unnecessary interjections.

We are, after all, a House of review which has served this state and the people of Tasmania since 1856. It's often said that the proceedings in the Legislative Council are more considered and temperate than when it comes to those of the other place. Some may even say 'boring'.

As President, I've always allowed a certain degree of interjection during debate. I think that's healthy. Up to a point, interjections can promote a very healthy debate and not interrupt the thread of the speech being delivered. However, strictly speaking, a member may only interrupt another in specific circumstances, such as calling attention to a point of order, calling attention to a matter of privileges, calling attention to the lack of a quorum, objecting to the use of words used in debate, or moving that a member no longer be heard.

While we have a practice of allowing for interjections, we just ask that if members are conversing or discussing with other members during the course of the day, it be done in a quiet and respectful manner. Not that it will get to this point, but if it does get to a point, I may stand and leave the chair and suspend the sitting until the ringing of the bells so everyone can have a break and cool their heels.

I may decide to rule that no interjections will be tolerated by any member in the course of the debate, and this will apply to all members. All members deserve to be treated fairly, especially during this debate, and all members need to be heard.

Therefore, just a reminder - and we won't be going anywhere near this - but the rules in Part 15 of the Council's Standing Orders relate in particular to the content of any contribution to a debate, as well as interjections:

Standing Order 99(5): All imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections are disorderly.

Standing Order 99(8): Members are not to promote a quarrel with any other member.

We've all recently discussed rules around our workplace. While members can strongly disagree, that is not an excuse for any bad conduct, so just keep that in mind. It's often contended that parliaments are unique institutions, and in some respects, this is true. It's absolutely not the case and should not excuse any behaviour that's not accepted in any other workplace.

There are also a standing orders that I'm sure all members are familiar with: standing orders 104 to 108, which relate to naming of members - it's never been used. It's never been used. It's just that as the Presiding Officer in this Chamber, I don't have the freedom that the Presiding Officer in the other place does to send a member out for a short period of time. It has to be put to a vote and the minimum time specified is 24 hours, so we don't want to do that, but just as a reminder of that standing order.

I expect today's proceedings will be more closely watched than any recent sitting of the Council. We have had times before when a great deal of attention has been drawn to this Chamber, particularly during contentious things like the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. We've had terminations, we've had all sorts of gender-related bills, and they have attracted a lot of attention. The Council has often been complimented on how well it has conducted the business in a respectful manner, and I know that will be the same case today.

You may have noticed that a number of media outlets have been authorised to come in. That's for this next debate. I thought it might have been for the third reading of the prescriptions bill, but I was advised that's wrong.

The reputation of the Council and indeed the parliament as an institution in the eyes of our electorates is to a significant degree informed by our behaviour here in the Chamber. I ask that members be mindful of that and accord other members that respect they would expect to receive themselves.

This is a vote of the Legislative Council. No individual member should be isolated for the vote that they make. Let's be kind and have a good day.

## MOTION

### State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 (No. 49)

[10.22 a.m.]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before I begin my contribution, I would like to acknowledge the wise direction that you provided to the Council today and it was very much appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge in your reserve, Mr President, the former member for Hobart, the honourable Rob Valentine, who we all know takes a keen interest in the workings of the Legislative Council, even upon retirement, because he quite often sends us a lot of text messages. It is lovely to see him in the Chamber today.

Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council approves, in accordance with section 26(9) of the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993*, the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 (No. 49) made on 21 October 2025.

I am pleased to move this motion in my role as Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council. In bringing this matter forward, I do so with the responsibility that accompanies that position, and I intend to outline the government's position.

However, I also acknowledge that this is a matter of considerable importance to many Tasmanians. You have certainly outlined that in your contribution, and one that has prompted strong views both within this Chamber and in the broader community. Because of that significance, I believe it is appropriate, indeed necessary, that I also speak not only as the government's representative but in my capacity as the member for McIntyre.

My role in this Chamber is unique. I am the Leader for the Government, yet I remain directly accountable to my electorate and to the principles that underpin my independence. It is important to me that both these responsibilities are reflected in the parliamentary record. I have my own perspectives as the member for McIntyre, informed by my community and my obligations to them, and my own judgment. Accordingly, my contribution today will be presented in two parts. I trust that members will appreciate the reasons for this. I thank them in advance for their patience and understanding.

Today will be a historic vote - probably tomorrow. The State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 will enable the development of the Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium. The multipurpose stadium is not just another infrastructure project; it is a bold investment in Tasmania's future. It is a project that will enable Tasmania to finally secure its own AFL and AFLW teams. The AFL licence is conditional on this development.

A world-class stadium will provide the Devils with the platform that they need to ensure that the club is sustainable and competitive in the AFL and AFLW competitions. But the stadium is not just about AFL; it's a true multipurpose stadium. It has been designed with functionality and versatility in mind. The multipurpose stadium will provide our champion Hobart Hurricanes with an upgraded home ground and boost Tasmania's opportunity to host the highest levels of cricket across all formats.

Beyond sport, the stadium will allow us to host concerts, conferences, trade shows and community events. The stadium's facilities will open new market opportunities. Currently, Hobart's upper limit for conferences is 1100 delegates. The flexible function room at the new Macquarie Point Stadium can be configured to host 1500 persons for seated dining experiences, or 1700 seats for lecture-style events, or over 2000 for cocktail events. This will give Hobart access to a greater slice of the \$36 million national business events market, further driving tourism, hospitality and investment, not just in Hobart but across our great state.

There has been a lot of debate about the roof. The roof will be a game-changer for Tasmania and for cricket globally. The presence of a roof negates weather-related disruptions, ensuring events can proceed as scheduled no matter the external conditions. The roof, the first of its kind in the world, will put Tasmania on the map, showcasing our innovation and unique Tasmanian brand. Cricket will play at the Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium.

The Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium is the centrepiece of the government's vision to transform Macquarie Point from a long-neglected industrial wasteland into a vibrant gateway to our capital city. The stadium will anchor the identity of the state, activate surrounding zones, and drive investment and connectivity across the precinct. Without the stadium, the vision for Macquarie Point cannot be fully realised. The stadium is essential to unlocking the site's full potential and transforming it into a vibrant urban destination.

The government is not just building a stadium. It is building confidence in Tasmania's future. It is responding to the aspirations of our younger generations who support this vision. I quote from the government's response to the planning commission report:

This opportunity is about inspiring our children through the achievements of Tasmania's own elite athletes, showing them what is possible both on and off the field. It is about creating real opportunities for young Tasmanians to build their future here - in sport, construction, tourism, hospitality, and beyond. It is about giving them a reason to stay, to thrive and to contribute. At its core, it is about making Tasmania the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Mr President, this order represents the conclusion of the Project of State Significance process. While the government's overall position on the project differs from that of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, this is a legitimate decision for government and this parliament to make.

This is why the POSS process, as set out in the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993*, provides a pathway for government to proceed with a project contrary to the recommendation of the commission. The act allows for government and this parliament to set a new vision for areas such as Macquarie Point to grasp new opportunities that arise, to set aside planning principles designed for a different purpose. We can make investment decisions for future generations that are beyond the remit of decision-makers in our planning system.

This is the pathway the government has chosen. This is the pathway the Chamber is urged to support.

The government response, which was tabled in the House of Assembly on 4 November, clearly sets out why the government respectfully disagrees with the planning commission's final recommendation on the project. What the commission found was that challenges such as parking, traffic, pedestrian movement, noise and environmental effects can be effectively managed. On behalf of the government, I would like to put on the record that this finding was due to the enormous amount of work done by government agencies and regulators to develop the permit conditions which form the basis of the order before the Chamber today.

Also, it is formally acknowledging that the permit conditions were developed following a detailed and considered review of the draft integrated assessment report (IAR). Two full-day workshops were held to examine the draft IAR issue by issue, followed by numerous meetings with agencies and regulators.

This process ensured the conditions drafted by government addressed all reasonable concerns raised by the planning commission at the time. The commission's positive remarks regarding the management of operational matters, such as traffic, are a direct result of months of hard work and collaboration across government agencies. The conditions were then further refined through the intensive three-week Project of State Significance (POSS) hearing process, with the government directly accepting suggestions from the panel, including the recommendation to establish a design and integrity review panel.

The project has been extensively assessed and reviewed. It has been considered by the Public Accounts Committee in an inquiry that ran for two years; it has been through the Project of State Significance planning process, which included extensive public consultation, stakeholder consultation and public hearings; and the submission of over 5000 pages of detailed plans and information, all published and publicly available.

It has been discussed and debated extensively in the parliament, including the tabling of no less than 39 documents, including advice, costings at the business case, schematic design and detailed design stages; numerous motions, questions and Estimates hearings; and now is currently being considered by the parliament at the final stage in the planning assessment process through the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025.

The project is subject to strong oversight and governance. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation is led by a very competent CEO in Anne Beach, overseen by a vastly experienced board.

The corporation has engaged the services of some of Australia's leading experts in major infrastructure projects, including Ken Kanofski and Peter Gemell to ensure Tasmania gets it

right. The corporation has been using and will continue to use Infrastructure Tasmania's Project Assurance Framework.

The Project Assurance Framework is an established project management tool that is used to provide detailed and independent project views by a panel of relevant experts at stages throughout design and delivery for large infrastructure projects. It involves independent expert reviews at key stages of a project's life cycle to assess its health, viability and readiness to proceed. Key components include gateway reviews, health checks, deep dives and regular progress reporting.

The State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 meets the requirements of the *State Policies and Project Act 1993*. The order sets out the conditions under which the stadium development must occur: it ensures that the project meets Tasmania's highest standards for planning, heritage, environment and community engagement. The order provides approval for the project to proceed as if permits were issued under a range of other legislative instruments, including the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* - a lot happened in 1993, Mr President - the *Historical Cultural Act 1995* and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975*.

The order covers matters such as European and Aboriginal cultural heritage, the disassembly, the alteration and the reassembly of the Goods Shed in accordance with the detailed conservation management plan, and the handling of Aboriginal midden material present on the site as secondary material, that is, material already moved from its original location.

The conditions in the order deal comprehensively with land use impacts, including on the Cenotaph and the heritage of the Hobart waterfront, by referring design plans to the design and integrity review panel, and any future design changes that are likely to increase cultural heritage impacts back to a heritage practitioner and Heritage Tasmania.

The order includes a robust set of environmental conditions as required by the independent Environment Protection Authority, mostly known around here as the EPA. This includes requirements around final remediation of the site, including the treatment and regulated disposal of contaminated soil, ensuring consistency with the current requirements of section 39F of the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act 2012*.

Beyond the permit, government commits to continue working with stadium neighbours and other stakeholders. This includes, for example, entering into a memorandum of understanding with the Hobart City Council and compliance with the permit conditions.

The government is also entering into an agreement with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra to proactively manage any potential noise or vibration impacts on events at the Concert Hall both during construction and once the stadium is operational.

The stadium's design is uniquely Tasmanian and seeks to minimise its impacts on surrounding uses and visual amenity through its transparent roof, muted colour palette, Tasmanian materials and limited light spill, but it will be visible and it will change the experience of Hobart in ways some members of the community will see as iconic from day one. For others it will take time, but as they experience the stadium as a place of celebration, where the Tasmanian community comes together to celebrate their team or favourite band, it will become part of the unique and cherished fabric of Tasmania for all Tasmanians.

The transformative power of truly inspirational cultural and social infrastructure in the city and the state has been seen first-hand and it is the aim to do it again with this proposal.

This order is the culmination of extensive consultation, expert review and public debate. It reflects the commitment to progress this development transparently and responsibly. I wish to state again this is an intergenerational opportunity for Tasmania. This stadium will be significant, and it will be unlike any piece of infrastructure delivered in Tasmania before and perhaps for decades to come. This is not just about sport; it's about pride, identity and prosperity. It's about giving Tasmanians the opportunity to experience what every other state already enjoys and it's about creating a legacy that future generations will thank us for.

Mr President and members, as the member for McIntyre, I take this opportunity to make it absolutely clear that my position in supporting a multipurpose stadium in Hobart has remained unchanged since 2023.

My appointment as Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council has had no impact whatsoever on my vote today. It is important to assure the people of McIntyre that my representation for the electorate will always be my priority. I intend to continue to exercise my judgment in the way I believe supports my electorate and Tasmanians more broadly.

I was recently reminded of my long-held position of support for the project because, on Wednesday 23 August 2023, I appeared on the front page of the *North-Eastern Advertiser*, proudly standing alongside students from Scottsdale holding 'Yes Stadium' stickers. I'd completely forgotten about that photo at the time. My support then was genuine, and my support today is grounded in the same reasoning, the same values, and the same commitment to representing the people of McIntyre and Tasmania.

This proposal to build a multipurpose stadium in the capital city of Tasmania has certainly generated significant debate and divided opinions. Even recently, I attended a 'Cuppa for Kindness' event held at the CWA rooms at Bridport, where the president of the CWA branch during the welcome to the event took the opportunity to well and truly have their say. It was interesting - as I was leaving, quite a few of them came up and said, 'We actually didn't agree with what the president just said'. So, there is that division and differing of views in our community. Let's hope after the next two days that dissipates.

Each and every one of those contacts from McIntyre has been considered and very much appreciated. I very much appreciate the time taken to make that contact and share their views. Together with my office staff, whom I sincerely thank for their support, we - and I say 'we' - have endeavoured to respond to those we have identified as our constituents. I can add that I have been criticised for not responding to all those contacts. I made it clear in my generated response that I would endeavour to answer as many of those contacts as I could. I have, and I can do no more than that. My office is not open 24/7.

A century ago, Tasmania set out to build one of the most ambitious hydro-electric schemes in the world, carving dams and tunnels through some of the most remote and mountainous terrain in the country. Today, we stand as one of the only net zero carbon jurisdictions on the planet - thanks largely to the investment that we made over a century ago. But it wasn't always celebrated. In the 1950s, as the Hydro-Electric Commission expanded, there were real concerns. Critics questioned the billions of dollars - in today's terms - in public spending. They questioned the government's borrowing levels and economic returns, whether

the money should have been allocated to schools, hospitals or roads. They questioned the budget blowouts. They saw Hydro as a state within the state: powerful, expensive, and unaccountable. And yet, history has largely vindicated the vision: the hydro scheme delivered clean, secure energy, attracted major industry, and gave Tasmania an enduring competitive advantage. It wasn't cheap, it wasn't easy - but look at the legacy it has left.

Fast-forward to today, and we find ourselves in the midst of another defining infrastructure debate: whether to build a stadium in Hobart to support the Tasmanian Football Club's entry into the AFL and AFLW competition and also to provide a truly multi-event stadium.

Like the hydro of the 1950s, the stadium has drawn criticism largely around cost, timing, position and other competing social issues. I believe we are once again being asked to look beyond the immediate and consider what this means for Tasmania in the long run. We forget that infrastructure is more than concrete and steel; it is about identity. When we built the Hydro we were not just generating electricity; we were generating a belief in what Tasmania could be and could do.

The stadium, like the Hydro, is a generational investment and our grandchildren will not thank us for saving a few million dollars today if it means we miss the chance to anchor a national sporting franchise to host world-class events, to reignite urban development at Macquarie Point, or to lift the cultural and economic aspirations of the state.

Big ideas aren't always comfortable, but history favours those who see beyond the now. Interestingly, the iconic Sydney Opera House was first labelled a white elephant. It was built to serve as a dedicated venue for performing arts, especially opera, ballets and concerts, as the town hall was deemed inadequate. There were considerable arguments surrounding the construction. The initial budget was significantly exceeded, leading to calls that taxpayers' money was being wasted. There were howls from the critics that Utzon's - that's the architect - unconventional design, especially the iconic sails would be unstable. Some urged that the project lacked community support, and some said that government resources should be focused on more pressing social needs rather than a performing arts centre.

Anyone would be excused for thinking that the critics were talking about the Macquarie Point Stadium. Hobart now stands at a similar crossroads. Another example to my mind is New Zealand's Forsyth Barr Stadium in Dunedin, which was a highly controversial pre-construction debate. Many agreed that Dunedin could not afford the first fully roofed, natural turf stadium in the world when they claimed it was really just a home for rugby. They said world-class performers would not travel there for concerts - those same sentiments being echoed with our proposed Macquarie Point Stadium.

Now, even the most strident critics against the Forsyth Barr Stadium have acknowledged its success. Those who argued international performers would not perform in the stadium have seen the cream of the world's performers strutting their stuff in the Forsyth Barr Stadium. The stadium hosted multiple matches in the 2023 FIFA World Cup together with numerous conferences, festivals and other events. A Deloitte study on its economic impact showed the stadium contributed \$165 million to the local economy in its first few years. There are other examples of stadiums across Australia that have proven successful, namely Townsville and, in the west, the Optus Oval.

I've always imagined, since we have been talking about this, a gather round-type of event in Tasmania where games are played perhaps at the Penguin Dial Range Oval and UTAS Stadium up in the north, and the Macquarie Point Stadium. Wouldn't that be something to be proud of? I certainly have that on my radar.

If I can, I will briefly move to Optus Oval, where there was once again significant criticism focused on cost overruns and financial concerns, with some experts questioning whether publicly funded stadiums generate substantial economic benefit, and there were concerns about transport, logistics and site issues because the stadium was to be built on an old industrial waste dump. Sound a bit familiar?

The vast majority of Tasmanians have said they want a Tasmanian team in the AFL and, I might add, so they should. Australian Rules football in Tasmania has a history dating back to the 1860s. So, for well over 100 years, football has been Tasmania's premier winter sport. It's the conversation people have when conversations run dry. However, the conversation now revolves predominantly around the AFL, the national competition involving all Australian states but for Tasmania, and not for the lack of trying. For many years, there has been a campaign for Tasmania to be included in the AFL competition. We now have the opportunity to be part of the main game, viewed not only all over Australia but also the world. Yet, we are trying our hardest to stop that from happening and, in doing so, putting an end to the dreams of many young Tasmanians.

Already, the Tasmania Devils has a membership of just over 210,000, more than any other AFL club, and that membership stretches all over the world. Tasmanians move out of this place, but their heart is always in Tasmania. Admittedly, the membership is inexpensive, but I bet my bottom dollar that over half of them - or maybe not my bottom dollar, my second-bottom - would continue their membership if our team's future was guaranteed.

The proposal to build the stadium fulfilled all the criteria laid out in section 60M of the Land Use Planning and Approvals Amendment (Major Projects) Bill, which received royal assent in 2020.

The stadium is a project which will have a significant impact or make a significant contribution to our region's economy, environment, and social fabric. Secondly, it is a project of strategic importance to a region. Thirdly, it is a project of significant scale and complexity. We all know why that process wasn't proceeded with and here we are today with what we have - an order which requires the support of this parliament to be approved.

I acknowledge the significant number of reports and the expert assessments that have been compiled, presented, assessed and dissected, where hours and hours of time and effort has been expended, but here we are now. It's back to the parliament to make the ultimate decision.

On this point, I want to acknowledge the significant work, time and effort that all members have dedicated to this. Last week we had two full days of extensive briefings, and it can be heavy going, but every member continued to have input.

It has been well documented and articulated if we don't have a stadium at Macquarie Point we don't have a team, which we should have had over a quarter of a century ago. We won't have the economic benefits which flow and potentially the precinct could remain dormant as it has since the last train rolled into Hobart 50 years ago. Our Prime Minister was reported

as saying this is a revitalisation project that will transform this city. It will produce ongoing jobs in tourism and in hospitality, as well as lifting up the sights of young Tasmanians who aspire to play for Tasmania in the AFL and the AFLW. He went on to say that the exciting precinct will provide real jobs and new transport solutions and, further, this sets up Macquarie Point as the future jewel in the crown of Hobart.

There is an argument that it's in the wrong position and it should be somewhere else. Some say it should be at UTAS Stadium in Launceston. For me, as a northern-based member that has some appeal, but it clearly doesn't meet the requirements as part of the licence, which is specific to the type of infrastructure required to support a sustained model for the success of our own Tasmanian AFL and AFLW teams. It is important to remember that the AFL Commission and the teams, which make up the AFL, have said that Tasmania will not be part of the competition unless the Macquarie Point stadium is built. They reiterated those comments on Wednesday 4 June this year.

In a fact sheet sent to all Tasmania Devil members, which some, if not all of you, would have seen, a question was posed: Why can't we have a team without a stadium? The answer was the Devils can't exist without a stadium. This is not a threat; it's the reality of modern AFL. Entry into the competition depends on meeting the same high performance and commercial standards as every other club. This means elite facilities. It goes on to say it's not a matter of negotiation; it's the foundation of the AFL licence.

The construction of a new roofed stadium in a central capital city location was a core recommendation of the AFL taskforce in 2019, and it remains so. Financial modelling showed that if you played at the UTAS or Ninja grounds, as opposed to the new stadium, the club would be \$5.8 million annually worse off.

Further, I've heard it said that the AFL can't dictate to us. I have heard that many times, and that comment on the face of it is right, but, again, it has to be remembered that the AFL did not come to Tasmania begging them to join the party; Tasmania sadly, didn't even get an invitation. It was Tasmania who, on more than one occasion, asked to be part of the competition.

When the AFL finally agreed, most Tasmanians were happy and excited with the prospect. I note members of this Council last Friday received a letter from the former premier, the honourable Peter Gutwein, outlining a number of facts around the AFL granting the licence and furthermore - I'm going to continue to quote from the letter received:

What needs to be understood is that whilst the AFL grants the licence, it was the presidents who had the vote for that to occur and the conditions attached to that licence. The presidents have a responsibility under law as directors, not to the AFL, but importantly, to their own club.

Like any director, their role is to act in the best interests of their club and to ensure it is sustainable and remains financial, and they have a duty to their club and its members in relation to any decision they make that could impact that. As the presidents would ultimately make the decision on our entry to the AFL, their number one concern was what would be the impact on their own club, and we would become a financial liability for the league, as the Gold Coast licence has proven to be.

The Gold Coast has proven since its inception to be a revolving door for talent both on the field and off, which surprised many, as the initial view was that sun, sand and surf and the promise of an idyllic lifestyle for young men and women would act as a magnet for players and officials both. This wasn't what occurred in practice and with limited success, this club was heavily subsidised to the detriment of others.

To convince the presidents, it became clear to me that to gain their support we needed to demonstrate that we were able to attract, and importantly, retain, the best Tasmanian talent as well as the best from across the country. However, unfortunately it became apparent, as identified by the taskforce and Carter report, that our ageing facilities would not cut it in the competitive world of elite sport and major events.

As a final point, I want to quash the idea that if you vote no, that a licence for a team will somehow still miraculously be granted by the AFL. The AFL, like any other sporting association, is a servant of its member clubs. The presidents of those clubs have a lawful duty to make decisions that are in the best interest of their club, so regardless of what the AFL might like to do, the decision will always rest with the clubs and their presidents. Those presidents have made it clear that they simply cannot support a proposition that will have negative consequences for their club, and without a stadium, our case just doesn't stack up. It's very clear that if there is no stadium, there will be no team.

Tasmania is not being treated any differently from the Northern Territory, which is also campaigning for a licence to join the competition. In the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 22 May last, it was reported that they too are required to build a new stadium. Andrew Dillon was reported as saying that every major city should have a stadium it can be proud of.

The Devils have already had a massive impact on our youth. There has been a 40 per cent increase in Auskick registrations in 2024 and a further 25 per cent increase in 2025. Mr President, if you listened to Leon Compton's ABC *Mornings* show in late May or early June:

Our youth were finally given a voice, and that voice was resounding. They wanted the stadium, they wanted a team. They are our future. They are the ones who are going to enjoy the fruits that the stadium and the whole developed precinct will bring. Why should we not get in their way? When talking to younger people and asking their views, they replied, 'It'd be kinda cool. We would get what other states have got: footy and concerts'.

Business Events Tasmania, another strong supporter of the stadium, said that the importance of conferences and business events to the Tasmanian visitor and general economy should not be underestimated. They have far-reaching benefits for restaurants, retailers, entertainers, transport and extra function capacity that will support increasing options in and around Hobart.

People have also stated that the AFL has only committed \$15 million to Tasmania for the stadium, but if you examine what they're really investing, you will see that that is a minimum

of \$15 million in the precinct build; \$10 million in clubs, training and administration facilities; \$93 million in game development; \$33 million to develop young female and male talent in the state; and \$209 million in distribution to the new club over the first 10 years to cover funding and to ensure a strong team from the start.

I'm sure that members possibly will recall our youngest person to present during our briefings last week, Lily from the Tasmanian academy. One of the things that really resonated with me, and I expect with many others, was the comment she made in response to a question, and forgive me for not recalling who asked the question. She stated, and this might sound very clichéd, but in her view, 'What you can't see, you can't be.' Thanks, Lily. That comment has stuck with me and, from a young person choosing our state to make her home, I believe that is a comment worth repeating. I'm so very grateful that Lily took the bold step and presented her thoughts.

I will conclude by saying, in my view, this isn't just about football: it's about Tasmania's future. It's about ambition, visibility, pride, and jobs. It's about unlocking the kind of cultural and economic benefits that flow when you back yourself.

Mr President, I commend the motion.

[11.02 a.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, I will state clearly at the outset my position on Tasmania's AFL team to assure all who may be listening now, or reading this at a later time, who may wish to quote me in or out of context, that I will be clear about my position: I fully support our own Tasmanian AFL team. I come from the north-west of Tasmania, which has a deep and lasting tradition of AFL football. I've played the game myself, many years ago now.

I'm a proud foundation member of the Tasmania Devils AFL Club and a paid-up member and supporter of North Melbourne, our record-breaking women's team no less - not so much could be said about the men, but the women are absolutely amazing. I've been to many AFL games in Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide Oval and the Optus Stadium in Perth. I've been to Optus only once, but I've been to the others more than once.

I support the construction of a new purpose-built stadium, a facility with sensitive design, community support and limited financial risk to the public purse. I recognise the need for high-quality facilities for elite sport alongside genuine support for grassroots sport for all Tasmanians and I want to see a new purpose-built facility delivered.

Today's decision concerns whether a particular development on a particular site using a particular funding model meets the standard we should apply to major infrastructure in this state. We are being asked today to consider whether or not to support the order that will facilitate the construction of a specific new 23,000-seat, fixed-roof stadium at Macquarie Point as per the agreement with the AFL, signed by the Premier on our behalf.

This was when the real division started. Premier Rockliff signed this deal containing many onerous provisions with no consultation with key stakeholders.

The parliament agreed to refer this planning decision to the Tasmanian Planning Commission - not a measure I supported, but the parliament supported it, so I support it and accept it - and awaited their findings. These qualified professionals applied established

planning principles. Whether you agree with their decision or not, their conclusion was unambiguous: the costs outweigh the benefits, the development is too large for the site, and it would impact this area's critical and important heritage values. This is a professional planning assessment delivered through processes that exist to evaluate development proposals objectively.

The order before us proceeds despite these findings. Parliament is supreme, and absolutely we can make this decision. However, we should understand what we are deciding: whether to approve a development that professional planners have determined does not meet planning standards.

I acknowledge the work that's been done by the government and MPDC and the huge cast of thousands that are working on this. I finally met a number of them on Monday this week, late in the day, to understand a lot of the work that's gone on with the project. I commend them; they've done a huge amount of work.

I will go back to the point I wish to really focus in on. The government's Fiscal Strategy No. 9, published in the November 2025-26 Budget requires that 100 per cent of government-owned business infrastructure projects exceeding \$50 million must have a positive benefit-cost ratio. This is the government's own fiscal strategy. This ensures money is invested productively and appropriately. The stadium has a cost-benefit ratio of approximately 0.5, returning only 50 cents in benefit for every dollar invested.

This is not to say, though, that an infrastructure investment that does not have a positive cost-benefit ratio should never be built, as clearly this would mean some critical infrastructure would not pass the test. The test is: is this critical infrastructure, and are there other options? The stadium itself - is this critical infrastructure, and are there other options?

Macquarie Point Development Corporation is a government-owned statutory authority. The question is therefore unavoidable. If the government holds its own businesses to this standard, why would it not apply to this project? That is a question that's yet to be answered. This is not about vision versus fiscal prudence; it's about consistent application of the government's own investment criteria for its own businesses - our businesses.

Tasmania faces significant fiscal challenges. As I detailed recently, and warned of for many years, we're heading toward \$20 billion in total government debt. We had zero economic growth in the last financial year, international exports declined 4.4 per cent, and our underlying net operating balance shows a \$1.4 billion deficit this year.

Treasury's fiscal sustainability report states that 'incurring debt to fund recurrent expenditure is not considered beneficial or sustainable'. Yet, that's what we're doing. We're currently borrowing to pay for operating costs. The costs of delivering services, public sector wages, health system operations, education, public safety, to name a few - we're borrowing to pay for those.

The Treasurer himself posed the right question, in my view, in a recent ABC *Stateline* interview when he said:

Can you look down the barrel of a TV camera and say to your fellow Tasmanians, is this an expenditure so worthy that you are willing to make the next generation pay for it?

I think it's a very good question he asked. He added:

If you are talking about operational expenditure so that we can have a better lifestyle today at the expense of the next generation, that is where it is not only an economic argument but also a moral argument, and I think it's unfair to the next generation.

Those are his words, but this is actually what we are currently doing right now. This is a reality into which this decision must be made. You cannot separate them and pretend one doesn't exist without the other. These are serious economic and moral principles. When we apply this test to the stadium, a discretionary expenditure, we must also consider whether future generations will pay debt-servicing for decades, perhaps \$1.8 billion over 30 years, while receiving an asset that's likely to be worth half of what was spent.

To be very clear, the stadium does not and will not eliminate our fiscal challenges, even if it is rejected. Taking it out of the mix will not put us on a pathway to a sustainable fiscal position. However, adding it in significantly compounds this challenge, and that's a point you cannot get away from.

There is a fundamental economic dynamic that deserves attention: the certainty of economic activity leaving the state versus the uncertainty of activity coming in.

When the Macquarie Point Development Corporation borrows to fund the stadium, and they will need to borrow, interest payments will take significant amounts from productive use in the Tasmanian economy every year. Even though borrowings will be through TASCORP, interest payments must be paid by Tasmanian taxpayers, through our General Government expenditure actually, because we will be paying for it. Every dollar of interest paid by the General Government sector to service the debt the Macquarie Point Development Corporation will need to take on is money that cannot be spent on health services, education or other infrastructure needs; that is how it works.

For this economic drain, there is absolute certainty - make no mistake, I'm not making this up - this is how it works. These are contractual obligations regardless of the stadium's performance.

To counter this certain drain, the stadium must generate additional economic activity from sources outside the state - this is another critical point - specifically through interstate or international visitors who would not otherwise come to Tasmania.

If the stadium merely redistributes consumer spending from other Tasmanian entertainment, the net economic impact is negative. If you're taking leavers' dinners, if you're taking weddings, funerals, engagement parties, conferences, celebrations of any sort away from other venues in this city, you're redistributing it. You're not bringing new economic benefit to this state and that is a net economic negative.

This is where airline seating capacity becomes critical. You need to bring a lot of people in who wouldn't normally come here - and there will be people who would come, I'm not denying that - but I'm just pointing out the very real challenges here. Seven home games a year, a few cricket games and one major concert a year is what has been talked about. It doesn't count the smaller ones and will not cause airlines to adjust schedules. Airlines do not operate with excess aircraft capacity. Fleet deployment is planned months in advance based on proven sustained demand patterns. The travel window for most interstate visits would be 48 hours. Not everyone has a week off to come for a footy match. There simply isn't the airline capacity to fly in the tens of thousands of additional interstate tourists, around 10 times a year, needed to offset the debt-servicing impacts. This is not pessimism; this is operational reality.

I have received thousands - and it is thousands; this not an exaggeration - of communications on this topic and it is not an overstatement. I have kept up with most of them until the last two days. Now I have been sending them all to my extremely hard-working and diligent electorate officer, Yvonne, who is working her butt off trying to respond to people. That will stop after today. I can assure you that any further communication I get will not be responded to - just to be clear for anyone who might be hoping they get a response. I'm happy to get emails but I will not respond to them any further.

I have read and responded to as many as I could manage and I have listened to Tasmanians from across the political spectrum, from every corner of the state. These have not been the usual form emails that we usually get on contentious issues. Almost all - and this is very unusual and this is the first time in my 20 years dealing with a contentious matter that I have experienced this - are not form emails. Everyone has put into their email or their message - their WhatsApp message, their Facebook message, whatever message - their own personal views on this, and they've all been relevant to the author on both sides of this divisive debate. People have thought about this and have made their views known.

Evidence in my inbox clearly shows - not just the inbox of my emails but every other inbox that comes in these days; some people have written handwritten letters - far more opposition to the proposed stadium, not to the team. We need to be really clear about this. Those contacting me have made it very clear the distinction around that matter. Many in support of the stadium have included comments like, 'Just forget the cost, it'll be so good for the state', 'the economic benefits will be far greater than what they are reported by the TPC'. Others have raised concerns that young Tasmanians will leave Tasmania if we don't build this particular stadium right now.

My job is to consider all relevant matters. I can't ignore the cost. I'm sorry for those who wished me to 'just ignore the cost'. That's not what my job is here. One of the matters I have to consider is the cost and the risk associated with the project as well as the quantified and unquantified benefits - economic and social. I absolutely accept there are unquantified benefits that are hard to measure and hard to put a dollar figure on.

I want to share a very small sample of a few messages I've received to give the flavour of them and to illustrate that some people have contacted me arguing the very same point on completely opposite sides of the debate. This is how polarised it is.

I note an email from a former president of Master Builders Tasmania; life member, Master Builders Tasmania; past president, Master Builders Australia and past board member,

Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. By all accounts, I suggest this person knows more about building large and complex structures than I do. He stated:

It is quite possible that the cost of the project, when taking into account all of the other supportive infrastructure required, could well be in excess of \$2 billion and even closer to \$3 billion when considering the cost of constructing the last stadium built in Perth.

Western Australia ... was around \$2 billion almost 10 years ago, with costs having increased by at least 50 % over the intervening period ...

NO OTHER STATE IN AUSTRALIA HAS HAD THIS IMPOSITION THRUST UPON THEM AS A PREREQUISITE FOR AN AFL LICENCE.

... It should not pass Legislative Council on either Financial or planning considerations.

Then a differing view from the Penguin Football Club president, Brian Lane. He said:

I have seen firsthand the impact on youth out-migration. In 2023, our club lost six young players to the mainland - a heavy blow for a town of 3800 people ... The stadium is a symbol of pride and aspiration. It creates pathways for athletes, careers for young workers, and opportunities for communities like Penguin ... A Yes vote is an investment in stronger communities, healthier young people, and a fairer, more inclusive Tasmania.

I hear and appreciate Mr Lane's passion for grassroots football. This is the ground where I went to watch the Two Blues play as a kid. That was my team back then.

Others wrote in support along the following lines:

As someone born and bred in Hobart, now raising a young family here, I care deeply about the future of our city and the opportunities we create for the next generation. I believe the Macquarie Point stadium represents a once-in-a-lifetime chance to deliver lasting economic, social, and cultural benefits for Tasmania ...

As a long-term Tasmanian who wants children to grow up in a dynamic, confident, forward-looking state, I believe this project is an important step toward that future. I encourage you to consider the broader benefits and long-term vision that the Macquarie Point stadium can deliver.

And another:

For us, the stadium is about much more than AFL fixtures. It represents opportunity, pride, and a future where our kids can stay in Tasmania and still aspire to the highest level of sport and entertainment.

I have a 10-year-old son who is extremely passionate about football. Having a modern, world-class stadium in our own state gives young athletes like him

a genuine pathway and the inspiration to chase their goals without feeling they must eventually leave Tasmania.

My 17-year-old daughter is equally passionate about AFL and music. A stadium capable of hosting major sporting events, concerts, and touring shows will be life-changing for young people like her. It would bring the kinds of experiences that Tasmanian teenagers currently have to travel interstate to enjoy ... It is an investment in our future.

I do agree that the opportunity of a new sporting facility can, and would, provide real benefits, as they've outlined. However, I have also received equally passionate emails from others, including parents of young children who don't support the stadium. This one said:

... I am a 42 year old mother of three and small business owner in the tourism sector. Like many my age, I am deeply concerned about the stadium proposal ...

As a tourism operator, the permanent damage that a stadium at Macquarie Point will cause for beautiful Hobart from an aesthetics standpoint will be devastating and negatively impact the important and culturally significant heritage surroundings of this proposed location.

...

It saddens me that the strength of our existing industry is being overlooked and the stadium is promoted as a tourism drawcard, which I don't believe to be realistic.

I believe the impact of the stadium on existing tourists' experience has been largely unconsidered, and the vast majority of stadium supporters don't understand the potential negative impacts the stadium could have on our already-thriving visitor economy.

Further, many do not consider the financial impact going forward with this version of the stadium at huge expense will have on preventing funding of other progressive initiatives that truly will attract more tourists from interstate and beyond for longer visits, both increasing visitor expenditure and benefiting all Tasmania residents through improved infrastructure, that we so desperately need.

As a tourism operator, it is my firm belief that this stadium will only draw a small number of diehard footy fans from beyond our borders, who will fly down for games, spend minimally, and fly home the next day. This should not be our primary target market for a sustainable tourism industry.

The same person also said:

I moved here as a 4 yr old when my Dad was playing cricket for Tassie and I am a passionate footy fan from an originally Victorian family. My three children play Auskick, cricket and soccer and are, like so many Tasmanian

kids, sports mad ... However, even now at 10-12 years of age, they understand that this project, at this price, and in this location is just not the way.

I heard other messages from families whose young people had said similar things. It's very mixed. There is not a shared consensus on these views. There have been many competing and equally valid concerns and points raised on both sides of this polarising issue.

Another email came from a consultant in sport, recreation, tourism, and open-space planning with over 30 years experience across Australia with a strong family base involved in football. Having played the game, and a father who is honoured in the Tasmanian Football Hall of Fame and a gold member of an AFL club, who stated:

The cost implications are very worrying when you look at the Treasury Advice Papers and the likelihood of severe cuts to public services, loss of jobs, increased taxes, sale of assets, and cutbacks across all sectors of community need. The facilities and needs of other sports and recreation will largely be displaced and local Clubs will face greater financial burdens, despite having higher participation rates than AFL football.

The debts will be intergenerational and the community including my grandchildren will have to contribute towards addressing the ongoing spiralling debt.

We've all received a vast range of messages and many well-articulated pleas for support as well as for opposition. I'm seeking to reflect the prevailing messages I've received and acknowledge the large turnout of people from across Tasmania at both rallies outside parliament. I have also heard from families and parents who have said:

Tassie's budget is in dire straits, health care is suffering, surgery waiting lists are huge ... our education system is struggling and in need of more resources, and our housing situation is in crisis. We have more pressing financial needs than committing to a hugely expensive stadium.

My three children are adults who are trying to purchase, build, or pay off houses ... They don't want their home state to be saddled with a huge debt that we will be lumbered with for decades to come.

And another:

My daughters have both left the state. They are part of the brain drain which we export every year to states which have better education systems and better health systems ... Tasmania is the laughing stock of mainland health and education systems. How do we address this? Please do not let the insanity of the stadium become a reality. For the sake of future Tasmanian children, please reject this stadium.

One especially challenging one came from a long-serving police officer. He said - and I'm only quoting parts of their emails; most of their emails were far longer than this, I can assure you - as you would know yourself:

... You will not hear from many police on this matter as we're gagged from political comment and monitored by police hierarchy.

I am working unconscionable hours, often unpaid after cutbacks earlier this year. Twice this year I have worked more than 20 hours straight. I'm watching good, community-minded police leaving in droves. Recruiting is up 30%, and still not keeping up with separation rates; this causes severe inexperience among frontline police.

In my work area, the rates of violent incidents have quadrupled in the last ten years, yet, we have to do four times the work with 13% less staff. One of my workmates was murdered at work this year.

This officer went on to detail some of the shocking circumstances that he's been facing daily, and he closed with a comment:

The society I've risked my life for on several occasions is being treated with disdain. The stadium is opposed by over 80 per cent of police in my work area. Please take care of the people who do the awful job so that you can live in comfort and security.

These are thoughtful Tasmanians expressing genuine concerns about priorities and intergenerational fairness. They are expressing what life is like for them. Not building a stadium, though, won't fix these concerns. That's absolutely true. However, I appreciate and understand their views and their pleas. It's incumbent on the government to address these problems, which they've comprehensively failed to do and have let the budget run completely out of control.

I want to also quote - and other members, I'm sure, may speak on this as well - comments from the RSL State President, Mike Gallagher. He wrote to us:

As you are aware, both the IAR and the Commission's report confirm that the proposed development will cause significant and irreversible harm to the heritage, values setting, and commemorative function of the Hobart Cenotaph. The evidence is clear: the Cenotaph's visual prominence, contemplative atmosphere, and national symbolism would be permanently diminished.

...

As the IAR and the Tasmanian Planning Commission confirm, no mitigation can offset the harm the proposed stadium would inflict on the Cenotaph. Once its setting and reverence are lost, they cannot be restored. This is not a question of political ideology but one of cultural and moral responsibility.

The RSL is not anti-development. They are asking that progress not come at the cost of Tasmania's most sacred place of remembrance - the first cenotaph built in a capital city in a country, 100 years old - in less than two weeks time. After providing a briefing to members last week, he wrote again - and again, I will read in part:

The Cenotaph is not simply a memorial. It is an intentionally designed commemorative landscape, shaped by the families of those who served and fell in Australian wars. Its sightlines - to the river, the mountains, the city, and St George's Anglican Church - were deliberately created to hold and honour the memory of those whose sacrifice, changed our community forever. Any proposal that diminishes or obstructs these sightlines risks erasing irreplaceable elements of Tasmania's collective memory.

One of the most significant sightlines is the historic visual connection between St George's Anglican Church and the Cenotaph. Parishioners - particularly widows and families of the fallen - asked for an unbroken visual connection between their church and the memorial as a permanent reminder of the love, service, and sacrifice of their sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands. This was an intentional act of remembrance embedded into the urban fabric of Hobart.

It was these same widows who advocated for the illuminated cross atop the Cenotaph. The cross was placed so it could be seen from all major vantage points across the city - a guiding light visible by night and day, symbolising the promise that those who serve would never be forgotten. This cross remains a powerful and active part of Tasmania's commemorative identity.

Equally important is the sightline from the Cenotaph to the mouth of the Derwent River. This is the horizon across which thousands of Tasmanians watched troopships depart for Albany, and then onward into war. For many families, this was the final moment they saw their loved ones. The unbroken river vista forms a 'living memorial corridor' that links the act of farewell to the place of remembrance.

These sightlines are not ornamental. They are intrinsic to the meaning and purpose of the Cenotaph. They represent grief, hope, faith, and memory - expressed through the deliberate shaping of the landscape.

Tasmania is a state where natural features dominate, and this is reflected in how the Cenotaph was positioned within its environment. To obstruct or overshadow these sightlines would be to fundamentally alter a sacred commemorative space that has stood intact for more than a century. This would be the first time a man-made structure has ever overtaken or dominated the Cenotaph's natural and historic setting.

I, like many others, had family members leave our shores to defend the freedoms we now have. Many did not return. My grandfather did. He returned home alive but harmed. My two great-uncles didn't. Their bodies forever remain in Europe.

We also received correspondence from Mr Terry Roe, National Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia; former State President, RSL Tasmania; former State President, Vietnam Veterans Association - Tasmania Branch. He reminded us:

Veterans rely on our politicians, leaders and elected representatives to honour our service, protect our heritage and to 'stand up, shoulder to shoulder' with

us to make the right decisions in preserving the integrity of a cenotaph which holds significant, deep meaning and emotional bonds for all veterans, their families and war widows who have lost loved ones in the service to their country.

He added:

As a proud veteran, having served our country with distinction in the Australian Army Infantry Corps for 20 years, including serving 12 months in South Vietnam as a combat soldier, I cannot impress upon you strongly enough the importance of standing with us to be our voice of reason and to vote against the building of this stadium. Let us preserve the significance of this 100-year-old cenotaph, and all that it represents for people who have put their lives on the line for our country.

I appreciate the significance of these sightlines and the importance of the place. Once lost, they will be gone forever.

Significant stakeholders were not consulted before commitments to build a large stadium were made that will forever fundamentally alter this space. Those not consulted in any meaningful way include the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the original ongoing custodians of this land; the RSL, as custodians to the Cenotaph; the Vietnam Veterans Association - Tasmanian Branch; the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra; TasPorts; and others directly affected.

Treasury provided no advice before the deal was signed on costs or capacity to pay before this agreement was signed on our behalf by the Premier. On the question of cost, we really don't know what the final cost of the stadium alone will be, let alone all the other supporting infrastructure, the facilities, including the expected costs of the other elite sport, cricket. We don't know the cost to make this work.

That said, removing the stadium from the budget will not fix the budget or put more money into Health and Education. I want to be clear about that. I'm not suggesting that's the case. It won't do that. Budget repair, so-called, is a much bigger and pressing issue than this project, regardless of the decision in this House, and needs to be undertaken. The cost just keeps stacking up and the demands of support of elite sportspeople, with falling funding to regional grassroots sporting clubs; they may be the ones who feel the pinch. Of course, there will be flow-on benefits, but we really do need to understand the full extent of the cost.

Only last Friday we heard of the cost of providing suitable sand for concrete. It will now likely all need to come from the north and north-west of the state, which will add cost to it. It won't add billions of dollars to it, but it's another thing on top of the already unknown high cost that we have. To say you might find some more suitable sand down here in the south is fanciful if this is to be built in the timeframe expected because you have to go through a whole mining licensing process to dig any sand out of anywhere.

In addition, we have just seen a downgrade of Tasmania's credit rating. Two reasons given for this not surprising downgrade, in the light of the state Budget that we will be wrapping up next week, include a number of real issues. Both Moody's and Standard & Poor's (S&P) mentioned Tasmanian net debt has doubled from approximately 66 per cent of operating

revenue in June 2019 to more than 130 per cent at June 2025: that's the net debt. Without countermeasures, Moody's projects that this could surpass 180 per cent by the fiscal year 2029. That's not such a good-looking picture.

Interest costs are projected to increase from 3.4 per cent of operating revenue in fiscal year 2025 towards 7 per cent by the fiscal year 2029, with cumulative interest payments over the next three years expected to be 27 per cent higher than previously forecast. That's the impact of a credit rating downgrade. The rating agencies noted that Tasmania's debt-to-economy ratio of around 36 per cent is the highest of Australia's states and territories, reflecting 'a disproportionately high debt burden relative to its small economy'. Moody's noted, 'These financial pressures - will increasingly constrain the state's ability to respond to future shocks, reflecting weaker governance strength than we have assessed in the past'. That's what they said.

What does this mean for Tasmania? The downgrade will result in higher borrowing costs for the state, reducing funds available for essential services and infrastructure. I find it galling that the Treasurer would seek to downplay the impact of this credit rating downgrade. It's disgraceful. We have a Premier who says that the Auditor-General's opinion is just one man's opinion. We have a Treasurer who said, 'Oh well, a credit rating downgrade's nothing too much to worry about'. Both are fundamentally disrespectful and absolutely wrong.

I got a message from a former employee of TASCORP, our lending government-owned business. Specifically, that person worked in the Treasury section where the funds are borrowed for the state. This is a person who had appeared before credit rating agencies on a number of occasions. They know how they work and understand their influence in capital markets. They know what they are talking about far more than I do in this space. This informed person raised the following concern as to why, in their view, this stadium should not go ahead.

First, the proposal failed to gain the support of any credible experts, be they financial or planning. Why should politicians ignore the recommendation of several experts when the reports are so damning of the project? The state cannot afford to add a minimum of \$1.8 billion to its debt for the stadium when there are so many other pressing commitments such as social housing, health, education, et cetera.

This person also raised the legitimate question as to whether we can trust the financial estimates of this government. A pretty fair question, I thought: after all, the government has been projecting a budget surplus in four years' time, year after year, and never got there. In fact, it's continued to go the opposite direction.

They also raised concern that Moody's downgrade to Tasmania's credit rating - and this was received before the Standard & Poor's announcement was made - may not be the last, and raised the concern that a lower credit rating results in higher interest rates on future debt which we cannot afford to service. They noted a back-of-an envelope calculation: \$30 million in annual interest costs on the stadium debt equates to a subsidy of some \$220 per attendee if there were 20,000 supporters at seven AFL games per year - that should price your tickets up a little bit. Any borrowings that are done by Macquarie Point Development Corporation are new borrowings. They will attract these new higher rates. That's the way it works.

On the question of public safety and transit around the stadium, this was a matter raised by the TPC and it was very helpful to hear from them last week on this. The Macquarie Point

Development Corporation is convinced this is not a problem. They reconfirmed that lack of concern about public safety in the modelling they have done when I visited there on Monday. They believe it can be managed. I think perhaps during an event, as long as you haven't got too many people who've had too many beers and perhaps not know exactly where they are supposed to be going, who cannot follow signs about which way they should perhaps exit, that that may well be the case. But I do have concerns about the egress of a crowd in something like an emergency situation where people don't think rationally and they don't take rational decisions. They just look for the nearest exit to get out. Hopefully this won't ever be a situation that we face in this circumstance, but you have to be able to deal with it if it does.

What also concerns me is the safety of egress through and around the site when there isn't an event on, which would be most of the time, let's be frank about that. That concerns me as a woman and I also imagine it's a concern for members of marginalised groups who may walk through areas where there's hidden spaces, dead ends and limited ways to get away from a threat. It's okay to have CCTV there. CCTV may help you to find the person who raped you, but CCTVs do not stop people raping you in the first place. Having dead ends and areas that are not easy to get through, or when there may not be a lot of people around, is not something a lot of people think about, who haven't had to think about which way do I walk home tonight when it's dark, when there are trees around or when there are big buildings that you cannot see who might be around the corner?

I appreciated the briefing, as I said, provided to me on Monday regarding many of these matters that I've raised. It was very disappointing that it did not happen until Monday when I have asked for some of this information, I think it was at least a month ago. Anyway, better late than never; it did give me a higher degree of confidence in the project but these concerns still remain.

With regard to the TPC assessment of the project, I wish to make some comments. The TPC examined this process rigorously. These are qualified professionals applying established planning principles. Their conclusion was unambiguous. As I said, the costs outweigh the benefits, the development is too large for the site, and it would impact on the area's heritage values. These concerns were confirmed in the public hearing with them and supported by other directly impacted parties.

I thank the member for Nelson for putting that up as an option to hear from them directly. I did have some calls from people - and there were obviously quite a few people watching that too - who wanted to reiterate that from their experience of being involved in the process, they absolutely supported everything they said as fact and true.

The findings of the TPC are not a political position or a political opposition. It's a professional planning process requested by the parliament, delivered through the processes that exist precisely to protect against poor development decisions. That is why it was sent there.

The government's response to it? Disagree without even having time to fully consider it, thank them for their work, and proceed to bring forward their own order to approve the project - well, originally it was going to be enabling legislation, but now we have moved to this order to approve the project.

When expert planners tell you that your project doesn't meet planning standards and your response is to abolish the standards, that's not really demonstrating vision. You are

demonstrating contempt for the very processes that protect public interest. Despite this, parliament is supreme and can and will make a decision on this matter, the order before us. We are here to make the ultimate decision.

I've sought to inform myself as thoroughly as possible. I've consulted with infrastructure investors and funders, people who make their living assessing whether major projects represent sound investments. I've spoken with representatives of the AFL, past and present. The Public Accounts Committee, on which I serve, has heard from a broad range of stakeholders and examined the decision-making processes in detail.

Through all of this consultation, one thing became increasingly clear: I cannot understand the pressure for the roof. I appreciate the view put by the government relating to holding concerts and white-ball cricket - the only form that we're assured of at this point. However, this deal was and is with the AFL, which has never stated that they need a roof. That requirement came from the Premier.

The AFL taskforce report, as the Public Accounts Committee found, suggested a new stadium is 'likely to be needed and would be a benefit' - not that it was essential, and certainly not that it should be a condition of Tasmania's entry into the AFL. I'm not saying we don't need a new stadium - we do. That's not the point. I'm just referring to the decision-making around how we've got here. Let me quote from the Public Accounts Committee's finding 5 in our report on this matter. It noted that 'the AFL Taskforce does not state a new stadium was essential, nor should it be a condition of a Tasmanian AFL team'.

Sure, we should have a stadium; but as a condition, that's where the problems started. The witnesses before the committee, particularly government representatives, tried to tell us it was a recommendation or condition the taskforce made. The actual words were that a new stadium is 'likely to be needed and of benefit'.

So, let's be accurate. This is quite different from saying it's essential or must be a condition. The distinction matters enormously. It reveals how much of the supposed urgency, much of the 'we have no choice' rhetoric is manufactured. As I said, the distinction matters. It reveals that much of this urgency is not actually driven by the AFL requirements.

Another challenge for me was the fact that there is no comprehensive assessment of alternative sites.

The Macquarie Point Development Corporation will hold unprecedented authority: borrowing over \$1 billion, managing the state's most expensive infrastructure project, operating largely outside normal planning processes. When we consider TT-Line's ongoing financial difficulties - a governance challenge that has cost us billions of dollars - we must ask whether we have confidence in similar structures delivering a project with this complexity successfully. I know that the Leader spoke a bit about that, and I know there have been other commitments made to other members on this matter. I still hold my concern. This is not about individual competence. It's about whether the government's governance structures and oversight mechanisms are adequate for a project of this scale and risk.

I firmly believe there are viable options and alternatives that would not impact the Cenotaph, would not offend the maritime heritage of the area, would meet planning standards, and would align with the government's own fiscal criteria.

I believe the AFL should work constructively with Tasmania if we show genuine commitment to delivering appropriate facilities. The stadium is one important element, but not the only element of a team's success.

Even if we commit to this and approve this stadium, there are plenty of 'get out of jail free' clauses in the contract the Premier signed with the AFL without any advice from Treasury, without taking it to Cabinet, and certainly not taking it to the people of Tasmania to be signed off. The same contract has been subject already to renegotiation on some timelines that we've already been unable to meet.

The AFL doesn't need or want a roof - that was offered by the Premier. So, let's consider if we actually need a roof as this adds to the cost, risk and visual impact more than any other part of the project. The community absolutely deserves to have a say in what we deliver. I note this is a planning process, this is a step in the pathway, but that doesn't mean things can't change. The order can't be changed, but things could be changed. If we consider whether we actually need a roof that adds to the cost and the risk and the visual impact, I think the community absolutely does need to have a say in this, in what we deliver and how.

We need to provide this opportunity to try to reunite Tasmanians, because we are not united. What should have been a unifying moment for Tasmania has become deeply divisive. This outcome was not inevitable. It resulted from process choices.

The parliament chose to send the assessment to the TPC, an eminently qualified body, for a comprehensive integrated planning process. The government rejected their report. We should and could have assessed alternative sites thoroughly. We didn't. We could have applied investment criteria consistently. We haven't. We could have been transparent about costs from the beginning. We haven't. We should have consulted meaningfully with affected stakeholders. We absolutely didn't. These are not criticisms for our own sake - they are observations about alternative paths that could have achieved broader support, and I believe would have received broader support.

What should have been a unifying moment for Tasmania has become one of the most divisive issues in recent memory. Probably the only other thing that really equates to it is the Gordon-below-Franklin in the division it's caused.

Communities should be celebrating together but they've become deeply fractured. Families are arguing; long-standing friendships are strained. This polarisation didn't emerge organically. It was created and fed by the Premier and this government, through their handling of this process.

From the very beginning, this project has been handled appallingly. Rather than building consensus, the Premier has bulldozed opposition. Rather than addressing legitimate concerns, the government has dismissed them as anti-football or, even worse, anti-Tasmanian. Rather than following proper process, they've either performed character assassinations of experts, ignored expert advice, or bypassed them at every turn. In part, they've also been resorting to emotional blackmail and threats. It's totally unacceptable.

I appreciate the interest and passion on both sides of this debate - a debate that should have brought the state together. If this process failed, the responsibility would rest entirely with

the Premier and his government, not with members of this House. I don't believe that's going to happen, but I want to be clear on that.

We should never have been put in this position. I said we have received thousands of emails on this topic. As I said, what is different is the lack of form emails. Almost every email, regardless of the support or opposition for the project, set out individually their thoughts, concerns, and reasons. This was a refreshing change to a debate such as this. Some particularly good humans - and particularly in recent days since I spoke to Leon Compton on ABC *Mornings* yesterday - have assured me that however I vote, they will respect and back me. I appreciate those people. They are very good people.

We can all have firm and strong views - views I'm happy to read and hear about - but I do not appreciate when the inference is that their view should prevail over all others, regardless of whether they are for or against this project. Many emails pleading with us in very articulate arguments against the proposal and others in favour have filled our inboxes and some have been in full support. Nearly everyone supports the team. Others support the team and this stadium. There are others who support the team and a stadium, but not this one.

I've listened to Tasmanians from across the state, as I've said. The depth of feeling in this issue is extraordinary and the division is heartbreaking. It didn't have to be this way. When you bypass normal planning processes, when you dismiss expert advice, when you characterise legitimate fiscal concerns as a lack of vision, and when you create false choices between a stadium or economic ruin, you create polarisation.

I don't lack vision for this state. I do have serious concerns about our financial trajectory for this state. The government tells us that walking away would inflict 'severe reputational damage' to the state. Well, I would argue the reputational damage has already been done - not by those raising concerns, but by a government that's handled this project with such extraordinary ineptitude that even the supporters of a new stadium have become deeply uncomfortable about how it's being delivered. I've heard that too.

Fundamentally, this is a planning decision, not a decision about a football team that we actually do have and deserve to have. It is certainly not the referendum on Tasmania's future that the government seems to suggest it is. It's a planning decision where economic considerations must be included as one of the biggest infrastructure projects we will have delivered.

When we come back to the key planning question though, it's not about whether a particular development, on a particular site, meets the standard and tests that we have applied to a major infrastructure project in this state and whether the cost is morally defensible in a time of high debt to fund services and a credit rating downgrade and the impact this will have on our ability to support the broader community.

The question remains, can and should we build it? How much certainty regarding design, constructability and cost do we need? It is true that you can build almost anything if you have a bottomless pit of money.

Alongside the economic considerations, you can also not ignore experts in the fields of planning. I'm not one of those. I have read and respect the pleadings of so many Tasmanians from all walks of life who fear the fiscal financial implications of this project, still not fully

costed and likely to escalate further beyond \$1.3 billion. I hear their genuine concern regarding the irreversible impact on the Cenotaph and the maritime heritage of the area. I've read all the emails and letters, even if I haven't managed to respond to everyone.

I absolutely hear the passion of those who desperately want the team, which is the vast majority of Tasmanians. I hear, respect and appreciate the passion of those who desperately want the team and this new stadium, many pleading with me to ignore the cost with genuine cries of, 'Build it and they will come. It will bring billions of dollars into the community'. I hear them and I understand their pleas and passions, but my role is not to say, to hell with the cost, let's just build it anyway. My job is to fully assess the process, the scope, the likely costs and to make a planning decision based on facts, not passion.

Mr President, the 2025 Pre-Election Financial Outlook was very clear and cannot, and should not, be ignored:

Economic growth correlates weekly to GGS [General Government Sector] - revenue growth in Tasmania. Accordingly, the current structural problem with the State Budget will not be resolved through future economic growth.

We can't build our way out of this. Further:

A [net operating balance] deficit means that the government is not able to fund the provision of Government services from revenue and must rely on borrowings to continue to deliver services.

And now we've had a credit rating downgrade which makes that even harder.

The Pre-Election Financial Outlook report went on to say:

This is not a sustainable position over the medium to long term. It is concerning that the recent trend shows a growing [net operating balance] deficit.

With regard to the net operating balance, the report further noted:

The worsening deficit position is further compounded by the projected additional borrowings required to finance the deficits which result in a marked increase to projected borrowing costs.

We know the TT-Line will have to have a bailout because you're either insolvent and need a bailout or you're not insolvent and you don't need money. We know that. That has to come from somewhere, too.

In addition, the point was also made in the PEFO:

It should also be noted that the [net operating balance] does not include capital expenditure or equity contributions to Public Non-Financial Corporations ... (including Government businesses).

As I said, we know we have major challenges facing TT-Line, Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks with the extra borrowings they're going to need to take on - not TT-Line as they can't afford to take any more borrowings; they will need money out of the general government sector - and others showing low or no returns to government. No returns from TasNetworks, low returns from Hydro Tasmania, none from TT-Line obviously, and TasPorts' falling returns to government by way of dividends. Some will need large equity injections from additional borrowings from the general government. I can't ignore these very serious matters and the additional challenge the credit rating downgrade will have. There are other alternatives that must be considered to meet the requirements of the team and the expectations of the AFL.

In closing, I know I've been on my feet for some time, but I wanted to truly reflect the feeling and sentiments out there in my community and across the state.

I will return to the Treasurer's question:

Can you look down the barrel of a TV camera and say to your fellow Tasmanians, is this an expenditure so worthy that you are willing to make the next generation pay for it?

Applying this test, professional planners say the development doesn't meet planning standards. The benefit-cost ratio fails the government's own investment criteria. The fiscal burden and debt repayment will constrain services and lead to harsher cuts to staff, other programs and services for decades. The economic returns depend on large measure on airline capacity constraints and other limitations to bring people into the state who would not normally come.

The heritage impacts on the Cenotaph and maritime heritage will be irreversible. There is inadequate, or in truth, absent consideration of the Aboriginal heritage and culture of this place, where a previously agreed plan that did pay proper respect to Tasmanian Aboriginal people has been shafted. There will be little to no green spaces around the stadium with swathes of concrete, or perhaps bitumen because it might be cheaper, surrounding the area. Yes, a great place for kids to learn to ride their bikes, but not a place to spend time enjoying the outdoor spaces: no room for green space.

**Ms Webb** - Concrete wall.

**Ms FORREST** - Yes, a concrete jungle, no room for green space.

Alternative options have not been comprehensively assessed. I could go on, but these are the outlines of the key tests I have applied as to whether this is an expenditure so worthy that I'm willing to make the next generation and generations pay for it when, in my view, there are other options that would cost us far less and still achieve the outcomes we need and the team needs for success.

I support Tasmania having quality sporting infrastructure. I support the state entering into the AFL; it should have happened years ago. I absolutely support investing in our future, but I find myself in a position where I cannot support a project that fails basic planning tests, violates the government's own investment criteria and will drain economic activity through debt servicing while generating uncertain returns, creates a space that is uninviting when major

events aren't on, impacts our most sacred site of remembrance and dishonours our Aboriginal people.

This is not opposition to progress; I'm sure there probably are people out there tweeting that at the minute. This is insistence on sound process, fiscal responsibility and respect for the principles we should apply to all major infrastructure projects and decisions.

I am firmly of the view that the AFL will not walk away and we absolutely should not be basing a yes vote on this based on fear that they will. I will never bow to the pressure of an external party, especially those who always act in their own interests; I love our state too much for that. I care for all Tasmanians, especially those we have failed as a state to deliver timely health care, safe and affordable housing, quality and effective education for all, and a place where all Tasmanians feel safe.

I do see the whole and big picture. I absolutely see the big picture here. I have been accused of being too narrow-minded on this. I have sought to fully understand this project and see how I could support it. I have seriously tried to get there, but the evidence is simply not there in my view. I cannot ignore the very real issues related to the state's financial challenges and absolutely acknowledge that not approving this stadium will absolutely not fix the state's budget challenge.

However, it does say to all Tasmanians who are facing cost-of-living challenges, have problems accessing health care, have low educational, aspirational outcomes and many other life challenges - the people I represent out there - are really feeling that we will fully consider all discretionary spending, to be sure it will provide the critical benefit Tasmanians need. That's my obligation to the people I represent.

The evidence is clear in every piece of research that I have read, and I have read a bit on this, that stadia do not create this massive economic return. They can contribute to a sense of pride and local business invigoration that, yes, indeed can occur, but we can't do that on a loss-making venture if the economic returns just aren't there. I firmly believe that better alternatives exist that would achieve broad community support and deliver appropriate facilities for our AFL team.

Sadly, this opportunity we're debating has created great division in this community and state when it should have been a great time of unity and excitement. That is not the fault of this House. That lies squarely and fairly at the feet of the Premier.

I have also heard from other members, through local media particularly, that there is a range of governance and finance and other commitments that are being secured by some members to support this project. I haven't sought specific commitments from the government as I simply can't trust the government to deliver on them. That's the reality: I cannot trust this government. I have banged on for years about the state of our finances and put forward suggestions and proposals, all to be ignored. We saw in the last election the commitments made by this government to various sectors of our community, only to be trashed. I don't believe their word on a piece of paper is anything. Anyway, that's my view on that.

They commit to fixing the budget. They committed to bringing forward a budget that we will deal with next week. It's an interim budget, but it's a budget full of holes. It is not a true picture of our situation; it absolutely isn't. Every day in Estimates it became more and more

apparent the money that should be there just isn't. It's a con. I trust the experts in planning, economics and others far more than I trust the government to deliver on the commitment they may make to secure the deal.

I will, of course, listen to all other members and their contributions with an open mind and listen respectfully. Everyone is entitled to hold their view. I thank deeply and acknowledge the people who have given me their unreserved support for my decision regardless of how I vote. These are truly remarkable and beautiful people. I thank them for their trust and respect. There are a lot of really good people out there.

I finish by acknowledging the wise and caring words of Dr Richard Benjamin, a consultant psychiatrist whom I know from Hobart. He wrote a piece to all of us, I believe we would have all got it, about the impacts of moral injury. I wish to finish with this. He stated:

For many months now I have been particularly aware of the effects that the issue will have upon you as individuals, and upon your chamber, and I copy you in here for your interest and wellbeing.

'Moral injury' refers to the distress that arises when people feel betrayed by events that violate their core values. First used in military settings, the idea applies more broadly. Guilt, shame and anger are common responses, and the effects can run very deep.

In Tasmania's stadium debate, highly polarised positions have emerged. For some, the stadium is vital - not only for sport and business, but as a symbol of hope and aspiration for our young people. For others, it represents money diverted from urgent priorities like education, health and housing. Both perspectives may be held with great conviction.

The moral injury here, on either side comes from a sense of collective loss. It is felt differently across different communities, from kids kicking footies in backyards and dreaming of the future, to sports fans and administrators, teachers and hospital staff, and those waiting for housing or medical care.

Perhaps the hardest part of this debate is the division it has created among Tasmanians, where none existed before. The remedy for moral injury - moral repair - means acknowledging harm, making amends, and finding ways to reconnect. In other words, looking after one another.

Regardless of the outcome, leadership will be needed - not just to deliver or reject a stadium, but to help heal the division and the hurt it has left behind.

I sincerely thank Dr Benjamin for his thoughtful message and concern for the wellbeing of all Tasmanians, including us in this place. Regardless of the outcome, I commit to my community, and to Dr Benjamin, to be the leader this state needs.

[12.09 p.m.]

**Ms THOMAS** (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise to speak on the Project of State Significance Macquarie Point Precinct Order 2025. I've been emphatically clear from the outset: with all my heart, I want to support this project. Tasmanians deserve to have the

infrastructure and the opportunities that people in other states have. We deserve to have our own Tasmanian AFL team. Our young people deserve the opportunities that both a team and a new stadium would provide. They deserve hope. They deserve aspiration.

However, the government's mishandling of this process and the state's grim financial position made me seriously question whether I could support this order in all good conscience. A government mantra of 'just get on with it' shows contempt for the size, scope and level of community concern that goes hand in hand with this project. I genuinely hope the government reflects on its approach.

Based on the evidence, I still have concerns that the government can actually meet the conditions required by the order and deliver this stadium at Macquarie Point within a budget envelope of \$1.13 billion. However, I am not going to stop it from trying.

Right or wrong, like it or not, due to the studious or rigorous approach that I've taken to analyse all the information available in relation to this significant project, to weigh up the risks and benefits and to listen to key stakeholders and to the people I represent, I landed myself in the invidious position of being perceived to have the potential to make or break this.

Right or wrong, like it or not, this is bigger than a stadium. This is intertwined with realising the dream of our own AFL team that Tasmanians have long wanted. This is a rare \$240 million federal government investment in Clark. This is likely to support our bid for federal funding to support the long-awaited activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor and be the catalyst for other big projects in Hobart. This represents hope, aspiration and opportunity. This will challenge the anti-everything mindset perceived to be entrenched in the Tasmanian psyche.

I'm also very conscious of the fact that this is supported by the majority of our 50 members of parliament - at least 32 in fact - 25 in the other place and at least seven in this place. In my electorate, those for and against are pretty evenly split.

I'm prepared to give the government a chance by supporting this order. However, my support is contingent on principled commitments that aim to protect Tasmanians. Given the order is not able to be amended by the parliament, I've worked with the government to develop an agreement outlining a range of safeguards that my support is conditional upon, to protect the welfare of Tasmanians in proceeding with this project.

In the interest of transparency, I seek leave to table my letter to the Premier requesting a commitment to these safeguards.

**Leave granted; document tabled.**

**Ms THOMAS** - Madam Acting President, I'm supporting this order on the basis that the government has agreed to a range of economic, governance, design and community safeguards, including, importantly, agreement to limit the state's contribution to \$875 million with any costs over and above the \$1.13 billion project budget to be addressed through value management or additional funding obtained from other sources. This demonstrates fiscal responsibility and protects the public purse.

I will outline the other safeguards further on in my contribution, and I also believe the Leader will table the government's commitment in full during her closing contribution.

**Ms Rattray** - That's correct.

**Ms THOMAS** - Thank you. I'm also supporting this order on the basis that - so far as I see it - support provides for the stadium project to pass through what is only the very first step in any development process: the provision of planning approval. This order does not guarantee that the stadium at Macquarie Point will be delivered. Should the order pass through this place today, it will be on the government to demonstrate it can meet the conditions set out in the order and get the tender to come in on budget. It will be on the government to prove it can actually deliver this stadium at Macquarie Point.

In coming to the decision that I've reached, I've reflected a lot on our role in considering this order. We are typically legislators considering bills before the parliament. Today, we are effectively being asked to act as both a planning authority and the government in deciding on an order that is not amendable by the parliament. We are being asked to approve, without amendment, a planning permit. This is typically a decision for planning authorities. We are also being asked to decide whether the government should invest taxpayers' money in a significant infrastructure project. This is rightly, typically, a decision and a responsibility for the executive government.

Given it is not ordinarily the role of parliament to determine whether major infrastructure projects proceed, I took the approach of genuinely seeking - on the basis of the information available - to form a balanced position that both enables the government to pursue its agenda and safeguards the interests of Tasmanians. My core concerns with the project reflect those voiced by many Tasmanians and include:

- the estimated \$1.13 billion cost of the stadium
- no new revenue measures are established or proposed to fund the construction and ongoing costs of the stadium
- the capacity of the government and ultimately taxpayers to afford the stadium, considering the dismal financial position of the state and the limitations of external source funding being \$240 million Australian Government funding and \$15 million from the AFL
- uncertainty around the economic return to the Tasmanian government and the Tasmanian economy more broadly
- difficulty quantifying the social return on investment to the Tasmanian community, and
- the visual impact and access concerns associated with the proposed site.

I acknowledge many people support the construction of a stadium and many people don't. Almost all of the arguments that I've been presented with for and against the stadium have merit.

Fundamentally, the Tasmanian Planning Commission's integrated assessment report finding that 'proceeding with the project would diminish the economic welfare of Tasmanians' deeply troubles me. In meetings with the Premier, I discussed these concerns and noted the things that I would need the government to commit to in order to address them. I worked through some of these ideas further with his office and then drafted a letter to the Premier that

I've now tabled in the interests of transparency. My letter outlined my concerns reflecting those of Tasmanians and went on to say:

In light of community concerns and the TPC's findings, a decision for me to support the stadium would be dependent on principled commitments that establish appropriate mechanisms for oversight and accountability and offset the risk that the project will diminish the economic welfare of Tasmanians.

Therefore, I propose a range of safeguards to protect the social and economic welfare of Tasmanians should the project proceed - economic safeguards, governance safeguards, design safeguards, and community safeguards ...

Mr President, the safeguards, as proposed in my letter, were as follows:

1. Economic Safeguards
  - (a) commit to a fixed funding cap - a fixed maximum total state government/state-owned business contribution of \$875 million for the stadium, in cash and/or borrowings;
  - (b) commit to a fixed funding cap of \$105 million state government/state-owned business contribution to the AFL high-performance training centre;
  - (c) commit to seek any additional funds required for either project from non-government sources such as the Australian Government, the AFL, Cricket Australia/Tasmania (as head tenants) and/or private investors; and
  - (d) commit to reducing the project scope, should any additional funds required for either project not be obtained from non-government sources.

A P90 cost estimate is the industry-recognised threshold for capping public expenditure and the government has informed us that \$1.13 billion is the P90 cost estimate for the stadium. Given this, and the contributions of the Australian Government and AFL, it is entirely reasonable to expect the government to cap its commitment at \$875 million.

A fixed state government funding cap prevents scope creep and demonstrates fiscal discipline, ultimately protecting the public purse. There's also a precedent set for this - Tasmania's equity contribution to Marinus Link was capped, so I'm very pleased the government has committed to a fixed state government contribution of \$875 million. This commitment will be tabled in the parliament. I will hold the government to account for this, as I know the Public Accounts Committee and, indeed, Tasmanians will.

As economic safeguard 1(e), I also asked the government to commit to developing a life cycle asset management plan, setting out the depreciation, maintenance and renewal schedule and cost estimates over the life of the asset. The fact that the government cannot answer the question about what the asset will cost the taxpayer in subsidies to operate, maintain and depreciate over its life cycle has been a source of frustration and uncertainty for me in making

this decision. Transparency and accountability in operational and life cycle costs of the stadium and the actual cost to Tasmanians in taxpayer subsidies ongoing is important. In fact, the minister for Planning, responsible for the order, just a couple of weeks ago in Estimates talked about how important understanding the life cycle costs of assets is for budgeting at a local government level. I'm pleased the government has agreed to preparing and publishing an asset management plan within six months of the project contractor being appointed.

In terms of governance safeguards, I requested the following:

## 2. Governance Safeguards

- (a) require the secretary of the Department of State Growth to consult with the head of the State Service before making any decisions on any conditions set out in the order.
- (b) appoint an independent probity adviser (IPA) to ensure ethical and transparent processes by providing real-time, objective advice to prevent and mitigate risks.
- (c) require progress audits, revised forecasts and cost-escalations to be publicly disclosed.

My rationale for these governance safeguards was that my critical concern with the order is the power vested in one single person, the secretary of State Growth, to determine whether conditions are appropriately met. The City of Hobart must then enforce compliance - whether they agree the conditions have been met or not.

I first raised these concerns with the government in May and I reiterated to them again in October, when the government gave members just five days to provide feedback on the draft order. Whilst I accept additional layers of oversight may present market risk, I believe both allowing the government to mark its own homework and having just one person hold all the decision-making power presents even greater risk to Tasmanians from a project cost, quality assurance and integrity perspectives. It is simply not acceptable for the government to hold itself to account on its own terms. No other developer is provided this latitude. Tasmanians rightly expect and deserve independent oversight of a project of this magnitude. So I'm pleased the government agreed to the governance safeguards I requested.

An independent probity adviser was included as part of the governance, oversight and assurance framework released by the government on 28 November, following a suggestion I made through the Premier's office that this be implemented to achieve such independent oversight of decision-making on the project. It is my expectation that the independent probity adviser will oversee decision-making of the government, relevant secretaries, Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Stadiums Tasmania from the construction procurement process through to head tenant lease agreements.

I also expect the independent probity adviser will guide and monitor the process from project approval, making sure it is fair, equitable and legally compliant while also helping to maintain public trust.

The government has agreed to require the secretary of State Growth to consult with the secretary of Premier and Cabinet before any decisions on conditions set out in the order.

Further to this, it has committed to transferring administrative oversight of the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act 2012* to the Department of Premier and Cabinet to reduce any perception of conflict between the Secretary of State Growth and ongoing oversight of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. It has also agreed to public reporting of any updated cost forecasts and overall project estimates.

In relation to design safeguards, I requested that the final design be agreed by the Design Quality and Integrity Review Panel, with particular reference to be given to visually respecting Sullivans Cove, the Cenotaph corridor and Mount Wellington sightlines.

The government was concerned there would be deliverability and cost risks associated with the panel having responsibility to agree the final design, but I'm satisfied to some degree with the commitment that the panel will provide advice on the finalisation of the project design and that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation will be required to make public the advice of the panel on any changes it recommends and whether those changes will be implemented.

Further, the panel will be chaired by the Strategic Architectural and Urban Design Adviser, a role that replaced the state architect, and it will include a nominee from Heritage Tasmania and a landscape architecture expert.

Finally, I asked the government to commit to community safeguards as follows:

#### 4. Community Safeguards

- (a) commit to developing regional community sports facility infrastructure plans, a framework for the equitable distribution of funding across all levels of sport and to increasing the Active Tasmania Infrastructure Fund for community sport facility projects to \$26.25 million per year over the next four years - a total amount of \$105 million - equivalent to the government's investment in the AFL High Performance Training Centre.

I also asked it to commit to maintaining participation funding levels.

My long-held position has been that my support for government investment in high-performance sport is contingent on it also adequately investing in community sport. This, a stadium and sponsorship for commercial teams, cannot come at the cost of community sport, yet during budget Estimates it became apparent that this government had cut funding for community sport into the forward Estimates by 72 per cent on 2024-25 budget figures and 50 per cent on 2025-26 budget figures.

I love sport but I'm concerned at the encroachment of elite and professional sport on government coffers at the expense of grassroots community sport. I have said many times that I do not want to see Tasmania become a place where kids can watch sport but they can't play it because there are simply not enough grounds or courts to allow them to. Despite

Greater Hobart councils asking for funding to develop community sport infrastructure plans for years now, we still don't have one. There is no strategic plan for any sporting infrastructure. As a result, we end up with facilities being built or extended based on marginal seat maths and divisive debates about where facilities should be built. Remember the community angst when the AFL High Performance Centre was proposed for either Rosny or Kingborough?

Therefore, I'm very pleased the government has agreed to the safeguards for community sport. It will be of great relief to the grassroots sporting community to hear that participation funding levels will be reinstated in the forward Estimates. There will be a sense of fairness and equity when they hear there will be a pool of funding for community sport facilities that is equivalent to the investment in the AFL High Performance Training Centre.

Mr President, this is a win for everyone involved in community sport. This means the kids who aspire to represent Tasmania will actually have the opportunity to get a start. Like the Devils, hopefully the Sports minister might even allow basketball teams to establish a clubroom in any new indoor court facilities they are the primary user of, so that they can reduce reliance on government funding and have a place that they can call home.

I want to be clear that the commitment I sought was for broad investment in community sport. It was not contingent on funding for any specific project.

Continuing on community safeguards, I also asked the government to:

- (b) commit to delivering a transport mode on the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor, new ferry terminal infrastructure and the expansion of the Derwent River Ferry Service by 2030 to provide access to the stadium.

Access to the stadium is one of the key concerns raised by the community and experts. Further, the government has long promised to deliver on both these transport initiatives. This stadium ought not come at the expense of these projects. It was disappointing, in fact, they were not factored into the MPDC's project proposal to the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The government has reinstated its commitment to these projects, with a strategic business case for a rapid bus service on the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor expected to be provided to the Australian Government by the end of this year, and plans underway for the ferry service expansion and new terminals.

The government also satisfied the other community safeguard requests I made, which were:

- (c) commit to requiring stadium construction and operational contractors to work with Regional Jobs Hubs to provide employment opportunities for participants,
- (d) commit to developing a 'Buy Local' plan, including consideration of the following:
  - (i) a target of 50 per cent Tasmanian labour and supplier participation;

- (ii) head tenant, food and beverage, ticketing and stadium hire contracts that are negotiated by Stadiums Tasmania to deliver optimal returns to Tasmanians;
  - (iii) food and beverage contractors to be Tasmanian owned and operated and procured by Stadiums Tasmania; and
  - (iv) food and beverage contractors to use Tasmanian food and beverage products wherever available.
- (e) establish a means-tested Affordable Ticketing Framework to guarantee affordable access to the Stadium for vulnerable and regional Tasmanians - e.g. subsidised ticketing and regional travel packages (similar to Ticket to Play/Wellbeing).

My rationale for these requests was that the interests of Tasmanians must be protected over and above other beneficiaries to maximise the economic and social returns of this project to Tasmanians. The project must create local jobs and generate equity in labour market and supplier opportunities it creates, both in the construction and operation of the stadium.

Finally, it's only fair there is equitable access to the stadium for all Tasmanians, so the benefits are enjoyed by more than just Hobart-based or wealthy Tasmanians and tourists.

This concludes the safeguards I proposed and, in short, the government's response to each. More detail is provided in the document to be tabled by the Leader.

Whilst I'm grateful the government agreed to these safeguards, of course the questions of how can I trust they will keep their word and how will they be accountable for delivering on these commitments weighed heavily on my mind. In my letter to the Premier, I said that a letter of commitment would be inadequate, as I'm sure the greyhound industry and salmon industry would warn me. So, the result is a statement of commitment to be tabled by the Leader in this place today, with accountability to be monitored through the Macquarie Point Urban Renewal Oversight Committee and reported to the Public Accounts Committee. I think that is as binding as we can get.

Mr President, trust has to be earned and once you break it, it is very difficult to regain. It has taken me a great deal of courage to trust this Premier and the government's word on this.

Ultimately, these are not commitments to me. They are commitments to the people of Tasmania to implement safeguards that protect their interests. I sure hope the government sees it this way, too. I, and the people of Tasmania, will be relying on the government to stick to their word here because this stadium cannot come at any cost. Tasmanians will be relying on the government to limit the state's investment, to allow oversight by an independent watchdog, to listen to the advice of the Design, Quality and Integrity Review Panel, and to minimise the risk and maximise the benefits to the local community.

I have worked hard to achieve agreement on these safeguards. I could not have supported this stadium without them. I, and Tasmanians, would feel and would be very let down if the government was to, in any way, not honour these commitments.

Despite the agreement we have reached, this government certainly hasn't acted like a government that wants or needs my support on this throughout the process. It hasn't covered itself in glory in responding to the analysis of experts, either. In fact, its behaviour has been quite to the contrary. It has not acted like a government that is trying to get key stakeholder or community support for the project, either. The government has not attempted to, at any level, respond to community and expert concerns about cost, roof height, impact on the Cenotaph, heritage and access. In fact, it entirely dismissed them.

It has not been quick to respond to any of my key messages or concerns. I started raising concerns about project governance when the enabling legislation was drafted in May, but it fell on deaf ears. I again provided feedback on the draft order to this effect in October when the minister's office provided members with just five days to comment. However, despite my meeting the deadline, the order was finalised with no change to mitigate my concerns and without even a response to my feedback until after the order was released.

Only late last week, when they realised project approval was on shaky ground, did the government release the governance framework, including the probity adviser I'd been suggesting for some time. Only then did they start taking my other concerns seriously.

I have also been raising concerns about the lack of strategic planning for sporting infrastructure and the need for more indoor court facilities since I was elected as mayor in 2021. In fact, I found my copy of the strategic business case Premier Rockliff presented to the Glenorchy City Council back in January 2023. On the front I had made notes that I had conveyed in the meeting, that we need a decision and action on the activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor as well as a sports facility infrastructure plan and - guess what else? - urgent investment in more indoor courts. I've been consistent in the things I'm advocating for on behalf of the Greater Hobart community.

While I'm grateful the government has agreed to these safeguards I proposed, its relationship management through this whole process leaves a lot to be desired. It's inability to effectively manage relationships within the party is fundamentally why we are here considering this order today. By supporting the order, I know I am positively reinforcing negative behaviour. Regardless, I do hope they stop and reflect on how they could have handled this better. I do hope they handle it better going forward.

The lack of respect for members and the rush on last-minute negotiations to get this over the line is far from good governance, and it is incredibly poor relationship management.

Speaking of relationship management, I know that this will be an important task for me going forward, too, in explaining my decision to those who are upset with it. I am genuinely sorry to those who desperately did not want me to support this.

**Ms Rattray** - Through you, Mr President, if the honourable member needs time, she can always adjourn the debate.

**Ms THOMAS** - Thank you, if you would just be patient with me. Thank you.

I really hope that, in time, you can come to understand the reasons for my decision and then you can see the work I have put in to try to make the best of a bad situation here, on the calculated assumption that this project in the order would be supported regardless of my vote.

Polling consistently shows that, across Tasmania, around 40 per cent of Tasmanians support this proposed stadium, while 60 per cent don't. In my electorate of Elwick, it is much closer to 50:50.

I sincerely thank each and every person who reached out to me to share their views on this issue - by email, post, text, Messenger, phone calls, meetings and visits to the office - because wow, there's a lot of ways a member can be contacted these days, and it is very hard to keep up. It has been like nothing I've ever experienced in my eight years of public office so far. I've received over 3200 emails and letters, and whilst early analysis showed around 75 per cent of people writing in were against the stadium, over the last week, the 'Yes' emails started flowing in by the dozen, and a later analysis levelled up to them coming in at around 50:50.

Rarely do we get emails in support of something. Rarely do we see rallies in support of something. I appreciate the efforts of our community to make their views heard. Sincere thanks to my electorate officer, Duncan, my mum Kathy, and my friend Nat for their efforts in helping me to analyse all the feedback that I've received.

Whilst I'm on the topic of family and friends, I note the impact that this has had on them, too. My family, friends and electorate officer have also had to endure lobbying from people desperate to get their message through. This is grossly unfair. I did say to my mum and dad, 'Your message to people can be simple: she hasn't listened to me since she was five years old, and she's not going to start now'. I thank my family and friends for their grace in enduring this, and I thank them and all those who have reached out for their heartfelt care and support through this hard time.

Community views were an important part of my decision-making and in helping me to understand and weigh up the impact of 'yes' or 'no' on both those for and those against. I also considered the fallout. How will those for and against respond should the outcome not be as they hoped it would? I consider that those who are against this stadium will keep fighting it should the order be approved.

Should it not be approved, I considered some who are for this stadium will most definitely leave the state in despair at the lack of opportunity and the 'anti-everything' mindset they feel is entrenched in Tasmania's psyche.

I also considered the impact if I were to vote 'no' and the order was approved anyway. I decided that if it was going to go through, I couldn't let it happen without attempting to make the absolute best of it. If I'd voted 'no', I would have missed the opportunity to protect my community, and Tasmanians more broadly, as much as possible, through achieving the safeguards that I have outlined.

I hope you can see that I've tried to make this a better outcome from a cost, governance, design and community perspective. This has been my aim in supporting this. I hope the key stakeholders, including the RSL, can forgive me and understand my decision. I did try to call a couple this morning and I did reach John Hardy, the CEO of the RSL Tasmania. He was certainly very gracious and understanding, and I'm very grateful for that.

We all have a choice here, if this should pass through the parliament. Those opposed can blame and shame and further divide Tasmanians, inflicting even greater harm than has already

been caused by this sad and sorry stadium saga. Those opposed can continue to stand up for what they believe is right and continue to fight against this every step of the way, because there are so many hurdles to pass through before any shovel hits the ground on this project. If you are fundamentally opposed to this stadium and it is approved, I expect it's likely you will keep fighting, and that is absolutely your right. If you want to, you should. I will absolutely respect your right to do so. My only hope is that you do so with grace.

Similarly, I caution those who are passionate about this and grateful for the outcome, should this order be approved, to go forward with grace. No-one should be celebrating just yet. A planning permit does not mean a project will definitely be delivered. There are a lot of conditions to be met here. There is a lot of scrutiny to be done on any decision made that conditions have been met. There are processes to be undertaken to determine the final cost and the final design. Once the government shows it can deliver this project with all the safeguards in place that it has committed to, then it will be time for people who are for it to celebrate.

Regardless of the outcome, I hope everyone will recognise there will be a lot of people hurting due to their view that the decision should have gone the other way. Even if you are happy about the outcome, I ask you to consider and be respectful of this. We all love Tasmania.

This has been and will continue to be hard. It is a continuing concern of mine that the issue of a Tasmanian AFL team, something we have sought for so long, has introduced an issue that has been so harmful and so divisive within our community.

As I have long recognised, this is a decision with profound implications for future generations, whichever way it goes. This is why I've been so determined to examine every piece of information available and to listen carefully to the people I represent before deciding whether I believe building this proposed stadium at Macquarie Point is in the best interest of Tasmanians.

I have empathy for everyone who has worked on the stadium project so far. There have been many people working on this across a range of areas, and the uncertainty over these last few years must have been excruciating. I acknowledge and thank you for your efforts.

I know that everyone is doing and advocating for what they truly think is best here. I know that the division this has created is severely damaging. Relationships have been strained. My own relationships have been strained. People are, and will continue to be, upset about this. Some will feel like they've won, others will feel like they've lost when this decision is made. Blaming and shaming can be a default response when emotions are raw, but we all have a role to play in repairing the moral injury that has been inflicted on so many Tasmanians, as the member for Murchison described. Regardless of the outcome, leadership will be needed to help heal the division and hurt that is left behind.

Through respect and kindness, we can all play a role in this. It is my hope that we all look out for each other as we navigate the path forward, that we can all at least accept views that differ from our own and trust each and every person is doing their best with the information they have to promote what they genuinely believe is best for Tasmanians.

In closing, I really appreciate people's patience as I analysed all the information, asked questions, scrutinised the answers and agonised over the push and pull between my heart and my head. I know the uncertainty has caused great angst for many. This has been the hardest decision I've ever had to make. I knew I was going to let people down whichever way I voted,

and this weighs heavily on me. However, the weight of the missed opportunity feels heavier than never knowing if it could actually be done.

So I support the order as the first step in the development approval process. The rest is on the government. It will be a test of this government's leadership, integrity and accountability at every single hurdle the project will inevitably face from here. It will be a test of this government's leadership to deliver this stadium and at the same time fix the budget mess.

I truly hope they don't stuff it up on either account. I truly hope the dreams and aspirations of all Tasmanians are able to be realised through this project, and through the work the government must do to repair the budget, so that it can adequately service the needs of everyday Tasmanians at the same time. I stand ready to hold the government to account every step of the way here as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and on the Floor in this place.

I also stand ready to play my role in navigating the path forward to repair the moral injury this divisive debate has caused. I really hope everyone else does too.

Considering the government's agreements to the safeguards, as tabled, provide for, among other things, a fixed funding cap, an independent watchdog to oversight project decision-making and greater investment in community sport to ensure everyone can play, I support the order.

[12.43 p.m.]

**Mr HISCUTT** (Montgomery) - Mr President, what a wonderful contribution we've heard, and from others today. I really appreciate the contributions we've heard today and the emotional struggle that we have all gone through during this process.

What a day today is. When I contemplated running for the upper House a few years ago, I certainly didn't expect an issue before us like this one: constant emails, constant media, constant pressure. Although I've only been here for all of five minutes, I'm sure other members can attest to the fact that days like these don't come by very often.

First, can I say how much I respect my colleagues in this House. They all have different opinions and reasons for their views, but through all this debate, open and private, has mostly been polite and respectful, and I intend to remain with that tone.

The stadium. The team. The Devils. Mac Point. The TPC. Gruen. Eslake. Gale. Coordinator-General. The Budget. Health. Debt. These are all words that have been heard and will be heard today. All are important pieces of the puzzle that move us towards making a decision.

We have had and will have stories about buying groceries or boats, about going on marathons, and all other manner of analogies. The truth of the matter is that we are a parliament making a decision and no analogy will ever capture the nuance required to replicate this decision. It cannot be simplified to be understood fully. It is a complicated and monstrous decision that has implications for all the people of Tasmania. To try to simplify it is not doing the decision justice. It requires a deep thought and a genuine attempt to understand all outcomes and conclusions.

There will never be a perfect decision and there will be winners and losers, whatever the outcome of this debate. We also shouldn't sugarcoat this decision. It's not just a case of 'let's build it'. It will come at a significant financial impost on the state. It is evident that the cost will be greater than what has been stated. The current estimate is \$1.13 billion, and this is likely to grow. It would be naive to think otherwise.

It is incumbent on us to remember that some funds are being supplied by others - for example, \$240 million from the federal government and \$15 million from the AFL. On current estimates, around \$875 million will come from the government's pockets for the build. Regardless, that's a lot of money. You could buy a lot of potatoes with that, if you will forgive my reference to my inaugural speech.

Perhaps, more aptly, you could say it would buy a lot of nurses and teachers, or so the argument goes. Is that really the case? In health alone, we are looking at spending \$14.5 billion over the next four years. That means that the amount we are proposing to spend on the stadium would keep the lights on in our hospitals for about three months - three months and have nothing further to show for it. We have a debt of \$4.2 billion, which is likely to grow to \$13 billion in the coming years. When you start looking at those numbers, the stadium begins to look like small fry in comparison.

It seems we have other structural problems causing our debt. Whether we do or do not build this stadium will have very little material effect on the budget. Repayments of \$50 million equals about five days in health. This is chump change. Tasmania has a problem with money, or I should say, the government has a problem with money, but the stadium is not it. Our debt is certainly a concern, so much so that Shane Wright wrote an article in *The Age*, from which I will quote:

General government net debt is on track to rise from \$4.2 billion to \$13 billion. Spending has been growing close to 10 per cent a year since the turn of the decade. Revenues have not matched the spending explosion.

He goes on to quote the Treasury Pre-Election Financial Outlook which states:

A combination of revenue and expenditure measures will be required. No single class of intervention is likely to be sufficient to move Tasmania to a sustainable financial trajectory.

A day later, Shane Wright spoke on ABC *Mornings* with Leon Compton. In response to a further comment from PEFO, which stated you can't go too hard or too fast or you risk breaking the whole budget, he said words to this effect:

That was a really interesting point. It goes to show the trade-offs that you have. I want to put this in perspective. The ACT economy is a third of the size of Tasmania's. At the start of this century, they were the same size. The ACT government has taken on a similar amount of debt to what Tasmania has done but has a tax base and an economic base which is stronger and now substantially larger. Ultimately, you have to be looking at ways of how we get the economy growing to help pay for the services that the people of Tasmania want.

The project we are discussing today is not just a single project, but one that could set up a number of other projects which will grow the economy. We have more work to do to fix the budget, and it will require a range of levers to fix it.

What must also be put on the record is the worry I have about the government's ability to manage major infrastructure projects. This is, however, a tale of two cities.

Part 1 - a ferry fiasco. Picture this: the far way town of Devonport, beyond the eyes of the bureaucrats and most politicians. A decision is made here, a moment passes there, a judgment is made. No-one who should know what is going on seems to know what is happening. How did this happen? I will let others get to the bottom of that. What is scary is that they did. We have to make sure it doesn't happen again.

However, I said this is a tale of two cities.

Part 2 - a bridge over troubled waters. Picture this: a river, an old bridge, a new bridge. Thousands of people crossing every day. The person responsible for an element of it probably uses it. The person responsible for another part probably has regular dinner with a friend who uses it. A project delivered on time and relatively on budget.

Which will the stadium be if it proceeds? This question, of course, is not one for us to control. That will be the responsibility of the government of the day. If this project proceeds and then is poorly managed, that will not be upon the people who vote for it in this House.

This point needs to be made very clear: if it is managed poorly, that will be on the government's head, and they will be voted out. I believe the government has added stronger governance in decision making, which has been shown to the members of this House, which should give some comfort that this ends up like the latter of the two cities.

The stadium does present opportunities. These opportunities cannot always be measured in dollar value. Sometimes it is hard to put a price on inspiration. It is hard to measure tenacity. It is difficult to put a cost on a dream. That is what worries me about a vote in the negative and what it may mean for Tasmania. Why would you come here and why wouldn't you leave?

Let me be clear: this has nothing to do with the 18 or 22 people running around on the grass. Sometimes people need to see it happening to be excited - especially young people who are leaving our state in droves. Cranes on the horizon, as it is said. The infrastructure pipeline, another way of putting it. This has worked for our construction sector; it has worked for our manufacturing sector. It puts certainty for our apprentices and TAFE students. It provides pathways in sports psychology, sports science, event management, catering, cleaning, public maintenance, glaziers, joiners, carpenters - the list goes on. These are people who may otherwise leave the state to find work. If they stay here, then their partners and friends are more likely to stay here, looking on in hope for the future.

People say that our kids will be paying this off for decades. I retort that they won't, because if we don't do something, then our kids won't be here at all. Then who will be here to look after us in our nursing homes while we complain and dictate that nothing should change and that we liked it better the old way?

Another positive to come from the team and the stadium is the renewal in kids' activity and Auskick. My son is a member of the Penguin Riana Auskick. Don't get me wrong, he has a lot of fun and seems to have a bit of bold sense, but I'm confident that he won't be running onto Mac Point as a player. He's too busy playing Roblox. However, the club and all clubs are seeing massive player number boosts across the state. The north-west region has a continued year-on-year growth. Last year, the Superkick program in the north-west accounted for 4 per cent of the total program across Australia. Let's put that in perspective. Tasmania has only 2 per cent of the population of Australia, yet the north-west region alone accounts for 4 per cent of the total Superkick program. These are incredible numbers. This trend is borne out across the state with continued year-on-year growth.

It is not just the children who are excited. I know adults who have been staunch one-eyed supporters of their mainland teams for decades who are ready to forgo their allegiances at the instant a Devils team steps on the field. The activity this will generate in Tasmania is immeasurable. Once again, how do you put cost on a dream?

Penguin Football Club President Brian Lane had the following to say, and I quote:

The Mac Point Stadium, together with Dial Park, represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Penguin and the north-west coast. With Tasmania's entry into the AFL, our town is uniquely positioned to host Tasmania Devils games, AFL Women's matches and AFL pre-season fixtures.

These events are not just games, they are catalysts for youth engagement and retention, inspiring young athletes to stay in Tasmania rather than leaving for opportunities interstate. Local business growth, hospitality, retail and tourism operators thriving on games days with thousands of visitors stimulating the local economy. Community pride. Families and residents coming together, strengthening identity and cohesion. Regional recognition. Penguin gains status as a sporting hub attracting investment and opportunity.

The consequences of a no vote and rejecting the stadium would have direct and damaging effects such as:

Loss of the AFL legacy. Without Mac Point Stadium, Tasmania risks losing its AFL viability and forfeiting \$360 million in pledged AFL funding, including \$167 million earmarked for junior development.

Missed regional development. Penguin businesses would lose the chance to benefit from the increased tourism hospitality demand and national exposure.

A stalled junior program. Our surge in junior participation will stall, leaving young players without pathways to elite sport and the emotional toll. A no vote would send a message of hopelessness to our youth, volunteers and families who have worked tirelessly to grow the game. It is more than football.

The Penguin Football Club is a proud community organisation. Through our junior program we deliver anti-bullying education, mental health support and

gender equity initiatives. Football keeps young people active, builds resilience and fosters wellbeing.

Without the stadium, these programs will struggle to expand and the opportunities for youth engagement will diminish.

I will pause the quote there to expand and talk about the most recent Penguin Football Club annual awards dinner. Throughout the course of the dinner, which I attended, two individuals in front of a crowd of over 100 people told their stories of hardship and depression when accepting their awards. They both professed that it was the culture of the footy club that had saved their lives. Football clubs are not just about sport; they're about supporting one another. There were not many dry eyes in the room. Brian finishes with a final appeal:

Mac Point Stadium is a strategic investment in Tasmania's future - economically, socially and culturally. For Penguin it means jobs, tourism, pride and pathways for our youth. To vote against it is to vote against the future. I urge you to stand with us for our club, our businesses and our community. A yes vote is an investment in stronger communities, healthier young people and fairer Tasmania.

These words are from Brian, President of the Penguin Football Club, which has around 1000 members throughout the north-west region. I think the above words speak for many clubs around Tasmania, not just in football but other sporting codes.

As mentioned in Brian's statement, although the AFL is only adding a paltry sum to the total stadium build, they have committed a substantial amount to Tasmania's junior development and elite football. This money will not be spent if the project does not proceed. This loss will be felt across all levels of the community.

Some people say to me, why would you support this? Hobart is so far away, it doesn't benefit your region. To add to the above points from Brian, this will have a measurable benefit for Montgomery through Dial Park being the home of football in the north-west. I have great confidence that our region will not be forgotten, especially considering the calibre of the leaders of the Devils with both Brendon Gale and Grant O'Brien, a proud Penguin boy like me, having strong connections to the region.

When games are on, hotels will be full, restaurants will be utilised, and shops will see an uptick. When games are not on, there will still be a benefit from training and activities that will be present at Dial Park. There is significant benefit to this region.

On the flip side is a situation where the stadium does not get built. What will that do to confidence in Tasmania? I can see that there will not be another significant private or public investment in Tasmania for the foreseeable future. Why would anyone risk doing anything here? Pack it up boys, let's head to somewhere that wants to do something. Hotels will not be invested in; I wouldn't bother opening a new restaurant in town. Why would I start a new printing business or expand a construction company?

Mr President, I have a passage to read from Steve Simeoni about the topic. Steve is the owner of Tas City Building, one of the largest construction companies in Tasmania. He says:

I am honestly scared that the stadium doesn't happen. The stadium represents the hopes and dreams of Tasmania. It is a project package for everyone. There is no doubt that it is a lot of money to invest and it will incur a lot of debt, but debt is something that developers and governments do. They use debt to make money and to create confidence.

At the moment there are no tower cranes in Hobart and few being utilised in the state. There is no confidence. I know as a developer and amongst the people I talk to that we are all holding back at the moment waiting for this to happen. Once it happens and the project is released, then investment will be released throughout Tasmania and hope will be released as well. We're investing in bricks and mortar that will be there forever. It will finish off the city and it will be paid off.

I am a supporter of housing, medical facilities and frontline services, but all of that money disappears. We could have something that is the backbone of Tasmania, an anchor of confidence. Confidence is key and it isn't here now. We need it for our families, our future families. I talk with a lot of developers and business groups and they understand that it needs to happen.

It is a package that will not only bring Hobart to another level but will flood confidence through Tasmania, filling the regions. There are other states out there failing right now, this can make us a success story across the nation. This message from me is straight from the heart. It's not a football stadium that you were being asked to vote for, it's an iconic structure that will be there forever. You're voting on belief in Tasmania, confidence in Tasmania, and this will feed throughout the community from top to bottom.

This shows the confidence that would be lost in Tasmania, not just for now, but for five, 10, 20 years down the road. We need to start thinking about what we could be, not what we are or what we don't want to be. Aspiration, vision and innovation matter. We can be at the forefront of Australia, the place to do business, the place that says yes. If this order fails, then I believe we risk all of this. Once again, I hope I'm proven wrong if the order should fail.

I know I said at the start we should not use analogies, but it was not that long ago that Central Coast Council, of which I was a councillor, received federal support for a new foreshore upgrade. This went through a public display and was showcased for all to see. Two things happened. First, we had a loud and high percentage of people who came out opposed to it. If we hadn't made that decision based on how many emails we had received, we would not have proceeded.

**The Council suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.**

## QUESTIONS

### Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra - Noise Limit Arrangement

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

[2.30 p.m.]

Is the minister able to detail to the Council the arrangement it struck with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra that provides \$4.5 million for mitigation works on our world-class small orchestra, including any commitment to limit noise levels and to what decibel level?

#### ANSWER

Mr President, I will seek some advice.

Certainly, the level of detail needed in that question is something that I do not have here today. However, I can do two things: either we can have that detail here for when we go into committee tomorrow to explain that in more detail, or I can take it on notice instead and provide those details for you.

**Ms O'Connor** - Today?

**Mr VINCENT** - Certainly, as quickly as we can.

#### Supplementary Question

**Ms O'CONNOR** - A supplementary question, Mr President?

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I will hear the supplementary question.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Does the minister have any information that he can provide to the Council at all about the agreement that was struck some time ago between MPDC on behalf of the state government and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra?

**Mr VINCENT** - I believe I've already answered that. I haven't at this point in time.

### JCP Youth Program - Database on Young People

**Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER**

[2.33 p.m.]

My question seeks an update on a previous Question Time response. It is in relation to a news article published in *The Examiner* newspaper on 22 October 2025 regarding the operations of JCP Youth, which included the following statements regarding the organisation's collation of a database:

We patrol through the CBD, we have hotspot patrols around the northern suburbs, we identify what young people are out on the street.

And another quote:

Information on young people is then logged into a software program to enable JCP Youth's staff to monitor where, when and with whom they saw a young person.

Can the government:

- (1) confirm whether these patrols are operating under the BEAST Program? If so, is this activity included as part of the funding agreement provision?
- (2) clarify the legal basis for JCP Youth to be broadly recording young people out on the street if it is not being done under a government-funded program?
- (3) detail how many participants of the BEAST Program that come under the 54 full-time placements are recorded on the database referred to in the quote?
- (4) clarify whether JCP Youth has provided any information to the government with regard to this database, and if so, whether any of that information collection/retention/sharing with government adheres to Schedule 1, Personal Information Protection Principles of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*?
- (5) provide full details of the software program used and the type of information being recorded by JCP Youth about young people as part of this surveillance activity, including:
  - (a) any stated purpose for that information collation;
  - (b) the duration for which the information is kept;
  - (c) any data management, access restrictions and protections applied to the database and its contents;
  - (d) who has access to this software program and information it contains on young people, including their personal details and their location; and
  - (e) how access to data and information contained on this program is managed, recorded and audited?

## ANSWER

Mr President, these are questions that I have previously answered in the House, but I did need to seek some additional information on questions (2), (3), (4) and (5). I will be reading those responses in today and, to the member, we will provide you with the full written response with all the new information in there.

With regard to (2), the further information, updated as of 28 November: under JCP Youth's funding agreement, participants referred by DECYP are recorded in JCP Youth's case management system, also called a database. Information collected by JCP Youth is managed with respect, ensuring participants' safety, privacy and informed involvement. JCP Youth operates within the legal framework of the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* and the Tasmanian *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*, as well as the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023*.

Requests for information about JCP Youth's activities outside of the government funding agreement should be directed to JCP Youth.

Additional information in answering (3): JCP Youth's partnership with the department to deliver the BEAST program is a multi-year model of 54 full-time placements distributed across the term of the funding agreement, being three years. For the 2025 program year, there are currently 18 active placements, and all 18 participants are recorded within JCP Youth's secure case management system database. Each record includes consent documentation, progress notes, assessments and engagement history, consistent with government and legislative compliance frameworks and retention schedules.

Additional information for (4): I'm advised the JCP Youth data collection and retention practices are designed to comply with Australian and Tasmanian privacy laws, including the principles under Schedule 1 of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*. Information shared with the department is limited to what is necessary for program oversight and is managed in accordance with the department's privacy and security requirements and the *Personal Information Protection Act*.

Additional information for (5): JCP Youth uses a secure cloud-based case management platform as the central system for recording, sharing and managing participant information in a safe and efficient way. This platform is specifically designed for the human services sector and complies with Australian privacy, child protection and data management legislation. The platform meets stringent data protection and security standards, including role-based access controls, multi-factor authentication and audit logging to safeguard sensitive information.

The system is a proven, evidence-based solution widely adopted across multiple jurisdictions in supporting collaborative case management, care planning and the protection of vulnerable children and families. In using this platform, JCP Youth ensure that information is managed ethically and securely, enabling transparency, accountability and best-practice service delivery.

The data and information JCP Youth collects includes participant demographics and contact details, emergency and medical information, case notes, engagement logs and incident reports, consent forms and legal documentation, program attendance goals and outcomes, photos or videos where consent has been provided.

Regarding the purpose for information and data collection, JCP Youth collects this information for the sole purpose of delivering safe and effective youth development programs, monitoring participant wellbeing and progress, meeting child safety, legal and reporting obligations, and ensuring accountability to funding bodies and partners.

In regard to the retention and storage of data and information, I'm advised JCP Youth works according to specific disposal schedules, including:

- general participation administrative record - for example, program attendance, non-sensitive notes and correspondence. JCP Youth retains this information for at least seven years after the participant is closed.
- case management and support notes - for example, behavioural and risk assessments, mental health or offending behaviour details. JCP Youth retains this information until the participant reaches the age of 25.
- highly-sensitive records - for example, where there has been serious offending, detention, or secure care or child protection involvement. JCP Youth retains this information as per schedule for children's records, which might mean indefinitely or until the participant is at the age of 25. It is then archived or reviewed for permanent retention.

I am further advised that access to the JCP Youth database or case-management system is role-restricted and audited. Only authorised staff such as program facilitators, team leaders and senior management may access participant information relevant to their role. Each user is assigned an individual login and multi-factor authentication. The system logs and records every access event for audit and compliance purposes.

I'm advised JCP Youth's privacy and consent agreement, signed by all participants, parents and/or guardians outlines the data collection, use, disclosure and protection practices applied by JCP Youth.

### **JCP Youth Program - Client Management System**

#### **Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER**

[2.42 p.m.]

Mr President, I want to follow up here because I want to be absolutely sure on the record that in the quote that I read from *The Examiner* newspaper article from 22 October this year, they say they patrol the northern suburbs and identify what young people are out on the street. I quote:

Information on young people is then logged into a software program to enable JCP Youth staff to monitor where, when, and with whom they saw a young person.

When that description is made there in that article as a direct quote from JCP Youth, is the software program they're referring to in that quote the client management system that you have described to me? When you read out the purposes of that client management system, you didn't say monitoring notes when they're out patrolling hotspots, for example. I want to be absolutely sure that we're talking about one and the same system.

## **ANSWER**

Mr President, I will seek some advice. Yes, that is my understanding. It is one and the same.

### **Mineral Resources Tasmania - Coarse Sand Shortage**

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HOUSING and PLANNING, Mr VINCENT**

[2.43 p.m.]

According to a report released the day after the Estimates scrutiny process from Mineral Resources Tasmania, as of 2025:

[South-east] Tasmania is currently facing a shortage of coarse sand with suitable physical properties for making concrete. This is largely due to the pending or realised exhaustion of the local supply at existing mines, coupled with a lack of new mines.

Why was this report not released until after Estimates so no scrutiny on it was able to be conducted? Do you have any picture of what the cost implication for the stadium is, if it were to go ahead, considering the lack of available sand in the south to make the concrete required for the build?

## **ANSWER**

Mr President, I will seek some advice on that.

It does not come under my ministry at all, so that question would need to be taken on board with another minister. I had nothing to do with that report. Thank you.

### **Supplementary Question**

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Supplementary.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I will hear the supplementary.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Mr President. My question is again to the minister responsible for the stadium order. I acknowledge that he is not the minister for Resources, but is the minister confirming that he's unaware of the detail of that report and the potential implications for the proposed Macquarie Point stadium?

**Mr VINCENT** - I thank the member for the supplementary. No, I was not aware of that report.

## **Active Tasmania - Infrastructure Grant Recipients**

### **Mr EDMUNDS question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN**

[2.46 p.m.]

The State Growth Tasmanian Active Infrastructure Grants Program 2024-25 closed in April 2025. As you know, the program provides grants to the sport and active recreation sector to build new and upgrade existing sport and active recreation infrastructure. Applicants applied for funding between \$25,000 and \$500,000 per project. After seven months, a significant number of sporting clubs are waiting to learn of the outcome of their applications. When will the government announce the successful grant recipients?

### **ANSWER**

Mr President, I thank the member for the question and for highlighting this really important round of grant funding. The active infrastructure grants, as the member outlined in his question, are very important to lots of sporting clubs around the state, because they provide substantial quantities of money. Much of that money to this point has been spent in providing more accessible change facilities, which is a bit of a challenge for some of our older sports infrastructure around the state, but meaningful upgrades are available through this program.

The latest round of the program unfortunately has been delayed due to the 2025-26 Budget not being passed earlier this year. This meant the full allocation of \$5 million was not available for the program through the supply bills. As a result, the assessment of applications was delayed to allow for the remainder of the funding to be provided in the November Budget. It is my understanding that Active Tasmania contacted applicants to let them know about the delay. Active Tasmania is now working through the applications, and I expect the successful recipients to be announced before the end of this year, so through the course of this month.

## **JCP Youth Program - Blackout Program**

### **Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER**

[2.48 p.m.]

Mr President, I have another update to a previous Question Time response. It appears from the Minister for Children and Youth that I'm not sure which of these questions I'm getting an update on, so I'm not sure which one to read in. I will read the preamble and then I will read (2), (5) and (6).

In relation to the government's arrangement with the organisation JCP Youth and specifically regarding the organisation's BLACKOUT Challenge, which recently saw, on or around 10 October this year, a series of photos published on the JCP social media pages, including Instagram and Facebook, which included images of JCP workers dressed in pseudo-military fatigues and wearing balaclavas to hide their identity, plus separate images of an 11-year-old boy, who was apparently the sole young person from a total of 43 BLACKOUT program participants to complete the entire five-day course, can the government:

- (2) detail any action, immediate and/or longer term, taken in relation to these images;

- (5) further noting reference to the 11-year old boy in the social media post included information that he was from the south of the state, please detail how the 43 participants in the BLACKOUT Challenge program were transported to a site on the north-west coast and back to their respective locations;
- (6) clarify what criteria or guidance JCP Youth is using to make a determination of 'mature minor', also referred to as Gillick competency, for the purposes of children and young people aged 11 to 17 years of age providing informed consent to services and subsequent publication, and:
  - (a) confirm whether appropriate written consent was obtained from, or on behalf of, all 43 participants of the recent BLACKOUT campaign;
  - (b) under schedule 2, section 2.2.5, activities of the funding agreement, detail what government oversight and compliance of any criteria used by JCP Youth for informed consent in this context is undertaken; and
  - (c) when did the last state compliance check or oversight check occur?

## **ANSWER**

Mr President, I thank the member for the questions. Again, this is providing additional information around those questions.

Question (2): I'm advised JCP Youth has acknowledged that, without appropriate context, some images recently shared on social media from the BLACKOUT Challenge may have been open to misinterpretation and did not adequately convey the intended message, which is one of participant empowerment. While some individuals have interpreted the clothing worn by staff and participants as pseudo-military attire, I'm advised JCP Youth has confirmed this was not the intent. The clothing and outerwear worn by facilitators was appropriate to the environmental conditions at the time, consistent with outdoor operations across the north-west region of Tasmania during the colder months and were intended to ensure those involved remained warm and safe during the challenge.

**Ms Webb** - No gloves. Balaclavas, no gloves.

**Ms PALMER** - I'm advised the attire consisted of standard cold-weather apparel such as jackets, cargo pants, gloves and face coverings used for warmth and safety, noting the clothing worn also included items such as neck gaiters or thermal hoods, which can be referred to as balaclavas. I'm advised JCP Youth has acknowledged that the use of face coverings may be perceived differently by those viewing images without context.

I'm further advised, on recognising this, JCP Youth immediately removed the images from all social media platforms and provided an internal directive to JCP Youth staff to review

and strengthen content approval processes prior to publishing any future images on social media.

Additional information for question (5): JCP Youth has advised the department that all participants in the BLACKOUT Challenge were transported in accordance with JCP Youth's transport and supervision policies. JCP Youth has advised young people were collected directly from their residential or placement address by their allocated JCP Youth program facilitator. The facilitator member is ordinarily the young person's lead JCP Youth worker and an existing mentor to each young person. I'm advised transportation was provided in fully insured JCP Youth vehicles by qualified staff members who hold a Working with Vulnerable People registration, current driver's licence, first aid certification and appropriate clearances to work directly with children and young people.

At the conclusion of a young person's participation in the BLACKOUT Challenge, the same facilitators transported participants safely back to their residential or placement address. Transport times and routes are recorded by JCP Youth as part of standard program documentation, ensuring full accountability and compliance with its internal safety procedures.

Additional information for question (6): JCP Youth has advised for participants aged 11 to 17 years of age that it determines informed consent through the following processes:

- voluntary participation: each young person voluntarily elects to participate in any JCP Youth program after being provided with detailed verbal and written information regarding the nature, structure and challenges of the program.
- program outline: participants receive a clear explanation of the expectations and safety procedures in plain, age-appropriate language.
- informed agreement: young people are asked to sign a consent and disclaimer form confirming their understanding and willingness to engage; parental or guardian consent is also obtained.
- self-determined challenge: participants are invited to set their own achievable program duration, which may be one night. Most participants nominate one night as their goal and all participants successfully achieve this on the program. Others elect to extend their time voluntarily based on their comfort and choice.
- ongoing assessment: facilitators monitor each participant's understanding, physical and emotional wellbeing, and capacity to consent through the program. I am advised this approach is consistent with child safe and trauma-informed practices and principles and ensures consent is meaningful, ongoing and reflective of the participant's maturity and comprehension of what participation involves.

I'm further advised there is no requirement on any young person to participate in JCP Youth programs such as the BLACKOUT Challenge, attend or take part in any program offered by JCP Youth, and individual programs are designed alongside young people to meet pre-identified outcomes. JCP Youth varies the BEAST Program activity inclusions to meet the needs of each individual participant.

## **Advice and Referral Line - Child Safety and Wellbeing Liaison Officers**

### **Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for CHILDREN and YOUTH, Ms PALMER**

[2.55 p.m.]

I have another fresh question for the Minister for Children and Youth regarding the child safety and wellbeing liaison officers (CSWLOs) working under the Advice and Referral Line (ARL) in the northern region.

Can you detail the current status of staffing in the child safety services, northern office, for response and case management teams, specifically in terms of normally appointed staff, not those assigned from other agencies and including those on annual and recreation leave and personal leave?

Can you confirm that child safety and wellbeing liaison officers for the Advice and Referral Line have been reassigned to response duties in the northern region office and, if so, how many have been reassigned?

Can you detail how many cases are currently assigned to response in the north, either actively allocated or awaiting allocation?

If child safety and wellbeing liaison officers have been assigned to support the northern region office, how is ARL managing community outreach?

### **ANSWER**

Mr President, I will seek some advice.

I thank the honourable member for the question. There's quite a lot of detail in your question, so I'll need to take that on notice. I'll get back to the House as soon as I can.

**Ms Webb** - Shall I email it through to you?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you.

### **Answer to Question - Gold Coast Stadium - Management**

[2.57 p.m.]

**Mr DUIGAN** (Windermere - Minister for Sport) - Mr President, coming back to the member for Hobart's question yesterday about the Gold Coast Stadium: I understand Stadiums Queensland approached the AFL to take back management rights in the lead-up to the Brisbane Olympics as the venue needs significant refurbishment ahead of the Olympics. Stadiums Queensland believes it is best placed to undertake these works and is very keen to ensure they have consistent management of Queensland stadia infrastructure ahead of the Brisbane Olympics.

All other major Queensland stadia are managed by Stadiums Queensland. I'm advised that this has nothing to do with revenue yield from AFL games at the venue. It is about capital

works leading into the Olympic Games. I have sought that advice from Stadiums Tasmania, which has, I believe, checked it with the AFL.

## MOTION

### **State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 (No. 49)**

**Resumed from above (page 51).**

[2.58 p.m.]

**Mr HISCUTT** (Montgomery) - Mr President, before lunch I was speaking about some new infrastructure on the Penguin foreshore that the Central Coast Council was doing. I was saying that, first, we had allowed it and the higher percentage of people who came out were opposed to it. If we had made our decision based on how many emails we received, we would not have proceeded.

Second, the elements that we were attempting to build came in under budget and we were eventually able to do almost twice the length of the foreshore that we anticipated. There are examples for and against projects everywhere.

In conclusion, this is now widely accepted as a stunning improvement and investment in the town. I doubt you would find many who are now unhappy. This story could have been made about Perth or Adelaide, but I like to keep things local.

One argument used against the stadium that I have struggled with is the concept of 'No Stadium, Yes Team'. I hear a lot of people saying that we have earned a team or we deserve a team, and those statements are true. However, the AFL is a business; it does not work on words like 'earned' and 'deserved'. It works on words like 'long-term sustainability' and 'profitability'. It has determined that the deal struck between the AFL and the Premier satisfies their needs in this regard. To use a motion to dictate that this will be renegotiated is farcical at best and duplicitous at worst.

I preface this by saying that if the order today is voted down, I will be happy to be proven wrong. Let's look at the reasons why the AFL would not grant a licence to Tasmania, and remember, it is not only the AFL but also the club presidents of the other AFL teams who need to vote for it. Tasmania is already a captive audience. There is no market share to gain here. Those who follow football will continue to follow football, and those who have no interest will continue to have no interest - as it has been for the past century. There will be no major changes to viewership. Those who already watch football will continue to watch and those who do not, won't. The same applies for memberships, sponsorships and all commercial indicators of success. There are no upsides for the AFL expanding to Tasmania other than I guess it's about time.

However, the list of reasons not to grant Tasmania a licence is considerably longer. It's another interstate visit for the Victorian teams, which make up the majority of the fixture. To get flights to match, it's likely teams from states other than Victoria will require layovers, creating an ineffective travel routine. Another team means it's less likely to make the finals, another team to prepare for, another team to take talent, and another team to take staff, coaches and officials.

People compare the introduction of Greater Western Sydney and the Suns and argue they were not required to invest in infrastructure as heavily as us. It should be noted that there were federal infrastructure investments, but, more importantly, look at what the AFL gained by tapping into traditional rugby viewers. There's a huge potential to grow their base in these locations as well as create stories and rivalries with their state counterparts.

To my reckoning, the likelihood the AFL renegotiates is low based on the above. They would also have to face the consequences of backing down. When they go to negotiate the twentieth team, what faith will they have that another club or state will not do a double take and expect them to move again? To renegotiate this deal, we will put the AFL in a poor bargaining position in the future. What are the consequences to the AFL if they do not renegotiate should the order fail? The way I see it, there are none. They avoid all negative situations I've previously outlined, and they will take no blame from the average punter. People who are pro-team and pro-stadium will blame this House or, hopefully, more rightly, blame the government for not doing the work to get it passed.

Fans will continue to watch football and grumble about not having a team, but they won't blame the AFL. Some will, of course, but not the majority. They will continue to watch, buy memberships and remain fans of the AFL. I remain convinced that the AFL team is intrinsically linked to the stadium and to its location. I believe this is evidenced by the fact that there is no business case for the Devils without the stadium. I trust that is agreed upon by most parties.

The argument often posed is that we should not do it at the moment, maybe another day. I fail to see a day which will present itself when the stadium is cheaper. Costs go up and delays have already added millions to the project. It's malicious to suggest that there will be a better time to build it. They say the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second-best time is today.

Mr President, parochialism exists in Tasmania. I don't think a truer statement has been made in this House, but the argument that the Devils should be located in Launceston doesn't stack up to reality, sorry. An argument is made that we are already playing football there, and that is true, but that is not where Hawthorn train, nor where their executive sits, nor where they call home, nor where they go to bed tonight, where they spend or where they live. It's perfectly capable of hosting football, just as Queenstown would be, as all you need to play football is eight posts, a few umpires and a bit of space.

But this question is not about playing football. It's fundamentally about building a home and a culture and, as much as it pains me to say it, the capital city is where this needs to be.

**Ms O'Connor** - You live a long way away; I will just say that.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I may enjoy my countryside, I like to shout and sing without affecting my neighbours, but it's not where active, young and exciting people want to live.

Hobart is where the action happens. It's also where the population is, where the accommodation is, and where the activity is. I know it's unfortunate that it will take north-west coasters a full day to drive there, but we're not going to build the stadium in Oatlands just to make it halfway.

The population of Greater Hobart, as I understand, is about 250,000; Launceston is only about 100,000. Yet, there is still the opportunity for games in Launceston. For those who want to watch the Devils but are unwilling to make the trip to Hobart, it is expected that four out of the 11 games will be played in Launceston at York Park - nearly 40 per cent of the games. The north does not miss out. The north-west will also be treated to AFL Pre-Season, AFLW, VFL and VFLW games and, I'm sure in the future, an AFL game or two will be played there. This is a whole-of-Tasmania investment.

Another fact that needs to be acknowledged is the multipurpose nature of the stadium. I'm not naive enough to think that Taylor Swift will be there, but I believe major events should and can happen. As technology shifts and changes, the needs of these event organisers will also change. Why shouldn't we strive to be better instead of always accepting our mediocracy?

I don't think it is likely I will attend the stadium a lot, but those who like cricket will enjoy activity at the stadium. I'm sure soccer will be played there, maybe even a rugby game or two. There is no end to the possibilities. Once again, this will behove Stadiums Tasmania to ensure that this eventuates. It could be a spectacular failure if not marketed right.

The sporting events are only one aspect of the multipurpose stadium, with events planned throughout the year. Areas of our economy that excel could and should be showcased at this venue. I would hope that major Defence conferences could be held to showcase our advanced manufacturing. Gastronomy and viticulture events should also be expected to occur. This will come alongside the other major sporting events that will come.

As previously discussed, one area I'm still concerned about is the cost blowout, and some things need to be made clear on the record. There has been a figure thrown about in the media by the opponents of this stadium that the drawings have only been completed to 70 per cent. This needs to be clarified, that what the statement was intended to say is that the issued for construction drawings are at 70 per cent complete. Coming from a manufacturing background, I'm familiar with terms such as these: design drawings, issued for tender drawings, and issued for construction drawings. I mostly used to quote off issued for tender drawings, and the drafting at this level often left a lot to the imagination. As such, we would need to allow for a chance of design change when we quote it.

If you were looking at an issued for construction drawing, then as a contractor you're able to make a much more informed decision. A 70 per cent issued for construction drawing is much similar to a set of drawings at 90 per cent to 95 per cent ready to make, not 70 per cent.

On top of this, the government has issued a P90 estimate. For those who are unaware, a P90 estimate can be described as a statistical cost estimation method that provides a 90 per cent confidence level in project delivery. This means there is a 90 per cent probability that the actual costs will not exceed the estimated amount. The method accounts for uncertainties and risks in infrastructure planning by incorporating contingencies and risk-adjusted estimates. It is not just throwing a dart at a board.

However, you may say that a P90 is pretty high, but it's not 100 per cent sure - and this is true. Today, we are discussing the approval or otherwise for a \$1.13 billion stadium, but what if it goes out to tender and costs \$1.3 billion, \$1.5 billion, or \$2 billion? Well, the government has listened to my concerns, as I understand it. This is before the tabled papers by the member for Elwick. If the tender comes through at an inflated price, any more funds, as I understand it,

would need to be appropriated through parliament in such a way that parliament can decide if more money will be allocated. Basically, if the budget blowout happens, parliamentarians will have another opportunity to say, 'No, we agreed to \$1.13 billion, not \$2 billion', or whatever it may be.

This will not stop all cost blowouts and can't cover variations after the contract is given, but it is one more layer of protection that we've been able to achieve. I'd like the Leader to confirm this in her response.

There has been an argument made that we are here acting as a planning authority. I confess that there are a lot of similarities. If we were a planning authority, we would be legislated to listen to expert advice. We would also have the ability to have our decisions overturned by another body. We are charged with agreeing to planning conditions, and that is basically all the order is. It can certainly be argued that the roles are similar. However, they are not the same. We are not a local council; we are a parliament. The legislation we are dealing with is through the project of state significance act, which intentionally takes it out of the planning scheme. We, as representatives of the people, are to approve or otherwise this project based on whether we think it is good for the people or bad for the people.

I'm sure there are members of this Council who have been in local government who have gone against planners' decisions because, even though it was technically correct, it was clearly morally wrong. We were not supposed to do that, and we could not legally do that, but sometimes it was the right thing to do. Unless someone challenged the ruling to a higher authority, it passed, and our community was better off.

Today is the one occasion with a planning decision where we are not bound by that rule. We, as parliamentarians, are able to be freed from the shackles of this process and are able to categorically vote on whether this is good or not, whether we think it helps or hinders our constituents, whether it is the right or wrong decision for our state.

I plan now to speak on some of the specific elements of the order and would like to note for the Leader and staff to keep their ears open for questions. I know we are discussing this in Committee as well, but I'd like to have it during this speech.

It's good to note, under the general provisions in relation to the documents, schedule 1, part 2, clause 4, A3(1) - gee, there are a lot of letters in this - that transparency is built into the project and that any relevant document that is approved with a condition under this order must be made publicly available, with a few exceptions. These are to be kept on a register and tabled in parliament quarterly. This should work in with the governance framework which has been established.

I would like to know more about the Design, Quality and Integrity Review panel on schedule 1, part 2, clause 10, A9 - I've provided these already to the government - which requires the establishment of this panel with various experience. How will the integrity and independence of this panel be controlled? It seems that this panel only has an advisory role and can, at times, be overridden by the secretary. They do have to give a reason, but the extent of the reason is not given. How can we be sure that this will not be abused?

Moving to changes to the existing footpath on schedule 1, part 4, clause 28, B14(2) it states that if a project stage makes changes to public footpaths that Hobart City Council must

consent to those changes before the works commence. What if they don't? I will have more to follow up on this in a moment.

It's good to ensure that in the operational management and adaptive review space in schedule 1, part 6, D1 there is a requirement that the project is completed to its entirety, including ensuring all landscaping and transport plans and works are in place, all lighting and signage is installed and that the car park, waste management, and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure are complete. These are done to the satisfaction of the secretary. I would like to know how this final decision is reflected in the governance plan. Is this a decision that will be elevated perhaps?

As part of the operational management plan, an Operational Transport Management Plan is required under schedule 1, part 6, clause 40, D6(e). For some reason it doesn't state 'required under condition D11' like the others, which is reflected in another clause. I would like the reason for this exclusion to be explained as well.

In relation to the aforementioned Operational Transport Management Plan, I'm disappointed that safety is not included as an issue that must be addressed. It doesn't mention safety at all. Can I have an assurance that this will be given the utmost consideration when it is covered or where it is covered? It might be in other legislation perhaps.

I have a question in relation to the monitoring compliance program, schedule 1, part 6, clause 47, D13(1)(b). I know we hope that there will be sporting events there year-round and we know that there will be football over the summer, but if there are no sporting events over the summer period, how will this condition be met?

Will a report of the review, as mentioned above schedule 1, part 6, clause 47, D13(3), be released to the public even if the secretary is satisfied under clause (4)(b) and will the report under subclause (6) be made public as this is not identified?

As I mentioned before, there are a number of items that require the Hobart City Council to approve them. How is the government going to manage these issues if Hobart City Council is reluctant or recalcitrant to approve these plans? I look forward to receiving these answers.

I'm in a slightly enviable position in this Chamber. Along with the members for Pembroke and Nelson, we recently ran elections, and to say that the stadium was front and centre of that election is an understatement. However, it does give weight to our opinions. We chose to voice opinions and were voted to this place with that full knowledge. It is not the normal way that I would come to a decision. I would normally respectfully gather all the information up until the point when a decision needs to be made and then cast my vote in a way that I think is best for the people I represent and the people of Tasmania.

This issue, however, had already become so divisive that I went against my normal principles as I thought people had a right to know what I was thinking. It was under that premise that I was elected. I did preface my election by saying that I would support the team and ergo the stadium, provided I was convinced that it was good for Tasmania. Much information has been gathered since then. During the gathering of all that information, I tried hard to find evidence that the stadium and team could be decoupled, and the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that no stadium equals no team.

I was voted in with 62 per cent of the vote after preferences. Of the five candidates up for election, the two who supported the stadium ended up with 61 per cent of first preference votes. I know that, and I am aware that there are many people who voted for me who would be against the stadium. I'm also aware that they still chose to place their confidence in me, knowing I would do my best to represent them. For me to go against the position that I took to an election would require a high threshold of evidence against the team and the stadium and I'm yet to be convinced.

Further to this, there has also been a lower House election since then. This once again showed an overwhelming support for pro-stadium parties and candidates. In fact, in the area around me, Braddon, the Premier's votes increased significantly. Once again, not all the people who voted for the major parties would have supported the stadium, but they all voted with the understanding that this is where their vote would be used.

Mr President, I heard a story once. It was in response to people claiming that the moon landing was a hoax, despite the supposed evidence of shadows and waving flags. The story goes to the largest evidence that the Americans successfully walked on the moon was that the Soviet Union didn't deny it. In the age of the space race, the country first to the moon gained considerable credence and set the pace of the technological age. All this is a long way of saying that if the Labor Party had any inkling that this was a bad decision, they would have jumped on it at the earliest opportunity. By definition, they are the opposition. I believe there is no greater evidence in support of this stadium than the fact that it has achieved by partisan support in parliament.

If this order would be put through in the negative, say, in a 7-7 vote today, that would mean that out of the parliament of 50, only 16 people have voted against it, around 32 per cent. What a travesty that would be.

This does not mean that the parliament should not hold the government to account, call out the poor decisions and processes that led to this deal - the negotiation; ensure that the construction is appropriate, ensure that the conditions are met, ensure that if there are any stuff-ups, the appropriate actions are taken. This will be the most scrutinised project in Tasmania ever, full stop.

Every eye from Tasmania and across the country will be on us and we cannot afford to get it wrong, but that will be upon the government and voters will judge them on their actions and abilities at the next election. I believe the Premier and the members of the Liberal Party know that their very existence in government depends on a relatively on-time, on-budget delivery of this project.

A startling proposition that's been put to me is that I should 'use my independence to block this bill' - people who have put forward intelligent, well-informed messages then sully them with a statement like this. Independence is something that I do not take lightly. I chose to run as an Independent despite what could have been an easy option. I've never been affiliated with a political party and, like my uncles Hugh and Dessie before me, the way I use my independence is to vote with my morals and how I think a decision does or doesn't affect my constituents and the entire state. I will not allow my independence to be used in that manner.

Lately with the rise of further left of centre Independents, I can understand how this idea has been diluted. Those on that side would argue that independence apparently should mean

opposition to government. I suggest that they pick up a dictionary. I will not have my independence questioned over this or any decision. I spoke about this during my inaugural speech and will strongly debate issues on their morals and effect, not which way a party says I should vote.

During my election and also in my inaugural speech, I said that I would speak for the young people of Tasmania. I quote from that speech when I say:

This does not mean that people shouldn't be allowed to go out and see the world, but they shouldn't need to leave Tasmania to get a job in their preferred positions.

This is a value I hold very dear to my heart.

A recent study by Dr Lisa Denny titled *Leaving Tasmania* tells a sad story. A quote from the executive summary says:

The study found that former Tasmanian residents report being pushed out of the State more so than 'pulled' to live elsewhere in Australia.

It showed that the major reason young people were being pushed out of Tasmania, and by a significant amount, was listed as 'lack of employment opportunities'. It's quite a significant difference. Although the reason for leaving was the same - money and better opportunities - the idea that people wanted to stay here but couldn't, instead of wanting to leave but couldn't find a reason to stay, is an interesting proposition. I believe that we may achieve something today that will change that direction.

The Legislative Council was privy to a series of briefings last week. One particularly moving session for me was from a young 25-year-old participant at the Tasmanian Academy of Leadership and Sport. She bravely shared her story and with her permission I will share a few passages from her speech today. Thank you, Lily, for being here today.

After finishing school in the UK, I looked to Australia as the world's sporting powerhouse to pursue a career in sports administration. From the other side of the world, 18-year-old me carried out extensive research to find a location to live and work as a young person wanting to gain experience in a sporting environment. Not once did Tasmania appear in that search.

I pause the quote to say what a travesty that is. She continues:

When I later moved to Tasmania for family reasons, I experienced that gap firsthand. I struggled to find opportunities for experience or employment in elite sports administration as a younger person eager to enter the industry. That changed almost a year ago with the announcement of the Tasmania Football Club-driven initiative, the Tasmania Academy of Leadership and Sport.

The academy has been established with Tasmanian connections and readiness for progress. Built on true partnerships with Cricket Tasmania, Netball Tasmania, the Tasmania JackJumpers, and AFL Tasmania, it

provides a pathway to gain the skills, knowledge and experience to gain employment in the state's growing sports sector.

In its inaugural year, the academy has delivered exactly that. Over half of our cohort has gained employment in various capacities in sport, filling a gap that previously forced young people to leave for career opportunities elsewhere.

She goes on to say:

Without the stadium, the risk would be that young Tasmanians will simply disengage - not out of frustration, but because they won't see a future here that reflects their professional ambitions. The academy's students have been clear: young Tasmanians want to see progress and investment in development that adds real, long-term value to our state - something that proves that Tasmania is moving forward.

Perhaps more importantly, we deserve opportunities here at home. We shouldn't have to leave Tasmania to seek career opportunities. Many of my peers have expressed that if the order does not pass, they will seriously have to consider leaving the state. Not just to pursue jobs in sport, events and entertainment - they would leave because they fear Tasmania isn't moving forward. The message would be one of stalled momentum, a future without opportunity we know exists elsewhere.

In contrast, the stadium has already created momentum. Many of its most powerful benefits are not quantifiable: visible progress, ambition, improved quality of life, and the legacy that we will leave for future generations. These all matter deeply to young people who are deciding where to build their lives.

I have every confidence in the Tasmania Football Club and in Tasmania's leaders to unite the state. Now is the time to pass the order to enable Tasmanians to move forward. The stadium represents a viable professional future for young Tasmanians, a chance for us to build careers here and send the message that Tasmania is seriously serious about growth, ambition and opportunity. Building a stadium will not drive young people out of the state, but failing to build it almost certainly will.

By supporting this order, I'm staying true to my commitment to young people of Tasmania.

The stadium also has significant benefits for our tradies - for young people in TAFE, with the build expected to employ between 160 and 200 apprentices; however, it also provides job security for those who have been in the industry for some time. As mentioned before, with the lack of commercial activity in Tasmania, it is not unlikely that our best and brightest tradespeople will leave to find more exciting opportunities elsewhere.

This is a decision for everyone, young and old. Our construction industry and our unions are calling out for a project they can be proud of, a statement piece where they can say, 'I built that. I helped with that. This is there because of me.'

I would like to acknowledge that this is a divisive subject. I could talk about rally sizes, or I could talk about emails for and against. The truth of it is that this is a contentious issue. Work will need to be done to mend our state. Whatever the outcome of this order, there will be those who are happy and those who are upset. My message to you all is: be kind, accept the decision one way or the other. We do not need more division.

From here, we either build the stadium, get our team and celebrate together, or alternatively, the stadium doesn't get built and we use whatever pressure we can to desperately hold onto a team, which at least we can all agree on.

Although I did not answer every email I received, I read all of them - every single line. I appreciate people who are passionate about what they believe in. It is the backbone of our democracy. I echo the comments from the member for Murchison when I say what was absolutely amazing was the lack of pro forma emails. They were nearly all from both sides - genuine, heartfelt messages.

This decision today is hard because both sides are right. My decision goes beyond the statements, beyond the reports, beyond the spreadsheets. It goes beyond the fear of the unknown and the unease of change. Those are important, but how do you look a young aspirational child in the eyes and say, 'We had a chance to do something great today. We had a chance to build our economy, to build our state, and to create the Tassie Devils whose roar will be heard across the nation.'?

Mr President, I will be supporting this order and the future of our state.

[3.24 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise to speak on this order as a proud Greens member for Nipaluna/Hobart - this beautiful city and its people, both of whom I love with all my Green heart. I acknowledge the tens of thousands of years of Palawa history here in the foothills of Kunanyi on the banks of Timtumili Minanya. Here, Nipaluna, is where the Muwinina lived, loved, fought, played, and raised their families for millennia until they were wiped out by the colonisers. The blood and the story of the Muwinina is written in this city's soil and its soul. That demands of us respect and reverence, not what Professor Greg Lehman has described to the Tasmanian Planning Commission: 'Black-cladding' in the stadium's Aboriginal culturally informed zone - the token gesture to replace the promised Aboriginal Reconciliation, Truth and Art Park.

In this great city, its heart is its people. What a big heart Nipauna/Hobart has, and in many ways, in physical terms at least, that heart beats most tangibly along the waterfront from Salamanca to Sullivans Cove - an extraordinary and rare place rich in Aboriginal and European heritage - a living, working port. An urban landscape like no other anywhere. A rareness and values that this order wilfully disregards and trashes. So too with the sacred ground of the Cenotaph, our shrine of remembrance and its careful sighting and sweeping views across the Derwent and south to Storm Bay. It's a place John Wadsley from the Friends of Soldiers Memorial Avenue described to us as: 'Not just a monument. Every element of the setting was purposeful'.

We know that, as community members and leaders, every time we gather there to honour, to grieve in silence, those thousands of Tasmanians killed in war and at that quiet, sacred place, were reminded of its terrible and infinite cost. In less than a fortnight we mark the Cenotaph's

centenary. Given the likely vote on the order, it will be a day of very mixed feelings for our veterans, I'm sure.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission confirmed no mitigation can offset the harm the proposed stadium would inflict on the Cenotaph. The lack of respect and honour for the Cenotaph in this order is egregious. It was only a week ago, in a briefing to us, that the state president of the RSL implored us to vote 'No'. Mr Mike Gallagher described the stadium order as 'immoral.' It is. It's utterly immoral. In my view, it's immoral to degrade the sacredness of the Cenotaph.

It's immoral to endorse the prioritisation of public spending on a sports stadium over our hospitals, over building new social housing, over giving our kids the well-funded education they deserve, or - and here's a novel idea for the major parties facilitating this travesty - investing in climate action and environmental repair as the natural world breaks down around us.

I am here on behalf of the Greens to tell every one of those thousands of Tasmanians who've contacted us begging us to oppose this order, and the many, many, many thousands across the island who feel absolutely gutted today, not to despair. There is a long, long way to go before a single sod of the estimated 220,000 cubic metres of poisoned soil at that site is turned. The fight will go on. The vote on this order will not be the end of it; you can be sure of it. In Tasmania, we are well seasoned to standing up to government and corporate bastardry and so strong is the public mood on this issue, I am certain there will be a rising up in the wake of this vote. Long live the spirit of peaceful non-violent resistance that defines so much of our modern identity as Tasmanians. The struggle will go on. We will rest, but we will not quit.

I had another speech written for today, a speech more hopeful that common sense would prevail, that the evidence and the clear community feeling would speak for themselves. I've ditched that speech now. We know now how the vote will almost certainly go. So laying out all the evidence, the irrefutable, independent, expert evidence for why this order should be resoundingly rejected seems moot now.

Everyone who supports this order has presumably read the Tasmanian Planning Commission's final report. We all know, after a year of meticulous and methodical assessment, the panel recommended the project not proceed. We all know the likely benefits, according to the experts, will be less than half the cost. Overwhelmingly, the benefits will go to the AFL and gambling businesses, and the costs will be borne by the people we were elected to represent and their children and their grandchildren for generations.

We all know that this publicly funded monstrosity will have massive cost blowouts. The Premier's promise today of an \$875 million cap on the state's contribution is meaningless. He has made such promises multiple times before. At the 2024 election, it was \$375 million, he said, and not one red cent more. Well, it is now apparently capped at \$875 million. That's 50 billion red cents more, all of it coming out of the public purse and all of it funded by debt at a time when net debt is projected to reach \$13 billion within three years. This for Australia's smallest and poorest state, when both Moody and Standard & Poor's have both just downgraded our credit rating, citing ballooning debt and the stadium in their risk assessment.

In the beginning, three years ago, after Jeremy Rockliff and Gill McLachlan stitched us up and sold us out, the cost of the stadium was projected to be \$715 million. Not long later, it

was revised upwards to \$775 million, then it was \$945 million and that was the cost the TPC based its report on and its finding that the stadium would add \$1.8 billion to net debt within a decade.

Now, of course, as we know, the cost of the stadium is projected to be \$1.13 billion, and we all know that cost will absolutely rise, and it will be the people of Tasmania who bear that cost. This was confirmed by panel member and respected Life Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia, Mr Gary Prattley, who told us at the TPC hearing last Thursday that construction costs are soaring, in some cases, he said, up to 300 per cent. We all heard the former Treasury secretary, Martin Wallace, last week when he told us that, on the current projected cost of the stadium of \$1.13 billion, the interest payments on the borrowings will reach \$90 million a year and rising within five years and adding \$1.5 billion to our net debt within the same period.

Now, to anyone who has forgotten what Mr Wallace said or not fully heard it, I'd like to read it back into the *Hansard*. I asked Mr Wallace, 'Just on the interest cost, by your estimation at \$1.13 billion, would you have any picture of that?'. He said, and I must say, Mr President, it was a very impressive display of high-speed mathematics:

Yes. The latest budget came out, obviously, a very short time ago and it shows that at the time when most of the borrowing would happen, it looks like the borrowing rate will be about 6.4 per cent. The core cost of the stadium is \$1.1 billion. We have included the things that are absolutely essential, works that are necessary to make it operational, and they add about another \$250 million.

The way it works out is, if you add those things together and take off the Commonwealth contribution and the AFL contribution, the state will be borrowing \$1.1 billion. So, \$1.1 billion at 6.4 per cent is \$70 million a year, except where you have to borrow the interest as well. The reason for why you have to borrow that much and why you have to borrow the interest is that the state has an underlying significant cash deficit for the foreseeable future without the stadium, so any cash that adds to that has to be borrowed.

So, all interest payments have to be borrowed. For example, the first year you're paying \$70 million and the second year you are borrowing another \$70 million. The interest on that first \$70 million is at 6.4 per cent, so roughly \$4 million to \$5 million, so next year you're borrowing \$74 million. The following year, you are borrowing \$80 million, so within about five years, you're going to get a debt associated with the stadium of, say, \$1.5 billion, not \$1.1 billion, and the interest costs at that stage will be \$90 million a year. He closed with this: it is a completely untenable situation.

With the greatest of respect to the member for Montgomery, that is not chump change. It's billions in debt that will be paid for by generations of Tasmanians financially and socially as public services are stripmined to pay for Jeremy Rockliff's vanity project.

We also heard Mr Wallace refute the oft-repeated mantra from government that the stadium will bring a whole raft of intangible benefits. The former Treasury secretary told us every possible benefit was incorporated into the cost-benefit analysis, and none of the social costs. He also scoffed at the totally unsupported claim by the Devils' Brendon Gale that this stadium will lift the economy in Tasmania by \$2.2 billion in 25 years. The independent planning expert finding is that:

... the Project represents a significant net cost and will diminish the economic welfare of Tasmanians as a whole, and it offers almost no scope for the site to become a vibrant active place that is attractive to visit outside of major event mode.

In very simple terms, the stadium is too big for the site and the benefits it will bring are significantly outweighed by the disbenefits it creates.

And yet here we are.

I also want to acknowledge and thank everyone who came along to brief members of the Legislative Council last Wednesday and Thursday. They were illuminating discussions. I take the opportunity to read into the *Hansard* the words to us of our highly, internationally respected author and historian, Richard Flanagan, when he said:

This catastrophe should have been killed off by the TPC report and the Treasury's Pre-Election Financial Outlook. That it wasn't speaks to a government without moral compass or fiscal responsibility. We are teetering on near bankruptcy. Federal intervention is openly discussed nationally, including in Moody's downgrading report, which specifically cites the stadium as a cause for its action, yet instead of addressing our profound social and economic problems, instead of focusing on healthcare, homelessness, education and debt, the government, to its immense shame, has spent two years focused almost entirely on one unaffordable stadium.

And Richard says to us:

I, like so many Tasmanians, am grateful that you are treating this issue with the gravity it merits. In our recent history, the upper House has shown itself to be the conscience of Tasmania. I hope it will be so again.

If I had asked any of you three years ago would you support a team if it rips hundreds of millions of dollars out of health, education and housing, I suspect all of you would have replied of course not, but that's where we are today. All members in this place have been under enormous pressure and we have been politically blackmailed. We have been told that without the stadium there is no team. We are voting today only on the stadium order, but it is a fact that every contract, any contract, can be renegotiated. If we had a Premier who put the public interest first, and if he had an actual spine, he would have started negotiations to renegotiate that contract straight after the Tasmanian Planning Commission's final assessment report. But he didn't, and now we're contemplating the approval of a project that will be a money-sucking black hole in the heart of our city.

The strength of feeling across all political divides and across the island is intense. I know that honourable members have many outstanding, heartfelt, detailed emails and letters from our constituents across the island. Here's one that arrived late last night that really struck me. The person who sent this to us has asked to be identified simply as Jo, but honourable members will have received this email and know who I'm talking about:

I'm writing to you on the eve of your important vote on the stadium. My family's been in business for 40 years in this state. Over this time, we've

provided income to over 200 Tasmanians and generated many thousands of dollars in GST receipts to the state. You'd have never heard of us. Not your fault. We've been quietly going about our business, our choice. We've received no handouts. We have over the years fought against local governments and water authorities that have charged excessive rates and punitive measures on selected businesses, all to no avail with no assistance, quite the opposite from the state.

To now see our state government bend over backwards to the AFL is a step too far. We're not only intending on exiting our business assets in the state, but our personal assets as well. The only reason I've never bought a ticket to watch the Hawthorn Football Club play at York Park is because the times I went there as a guest I saw many mayors and general managers of councils, GBEs and heads of state parliament there. Did they pay for their tickets?

Meanwhile, the government claims it brings millions into the state but there's no proof. I've caught planes home to Tasmania during these high peak times cheaply. I call bullshit. I'm old enough to remember the Silverdome, Derwent Entertainment Centre and York Park being promised to bring colossal revenues to the state: all bullshit. Where are those venues now? Sold off for peanuts.

Last week, I attended an event in Hobart and spoke to a prominent Tasmanian businessman who said, 'We should just build the stadium regardless of cost because if the state goes broke, we'll all be bailed out by the federal government.' Is this a sound financial argument to proceed with the stadium? No.

She says:

Melbourne is an ugly, grey drab place with AFL bunting everywhere. Hobart and Tasmania deserve better.

She finishes with:

Tell the AFL to piss off back to Victoria and take their ugly stadium with them.

There's a lot of talk about young people and their aspirations for the future and I understand that, and I also appreciated Lily's presentation to us last week, but it is not possible to speak for all young people on this project and no-one should try to. Young people in Tasmania are diverse and they all have different hopes and dreams for the future. I will read now from Amy, who's 19 years old:

My name is Amy. I'm 19 years old and currently living without a house. I have physical disabilities including a gastrointestinal disease that I've been deemed category 1, urgent, since April 2025 and it's caused a severe decline in my health. All of this on top of my severe mental health issues. I'm unable to work. I'm extremely worried about the stadium being built as I fear it will deeply affect mine and many others' futures. With funding for classes at

TAFE being cut, years of waiting on Centrelink to approve my disability support payment and lack of access to proper care, I'm struggling to see a way I can survive in Tasmania.

I fear the stadium will make these issues much worse for me and people like me, with the mass amounts of growing debts making it impossible for vulnerable people to survive here. I believe more Tasmanians are anti-stadium than pro-stadium but are having a hard time expressing their opinions due to the backlash anti-stadium people get from pro-stadium people. I thought I'd reach out to you because I feel you'd take mine and other vulnerable people's concerns more seriously. Please don't ever let people bring you down for making the right decision. I thank you so much for it and the Greens Party for trying your best to make a real change.

I've already noticed a lot of people my age moving away from Tasmania due to these growing issues. I want to love Tasmania, but it's getting harder and harder with life getting more expensive ...

We received thousands of emails in not dissimilar terms.

If you're more concerned about what business thinks, here's a quote from Graham Cox, the CEO of the Hellyer gold mine:

... I say to the leadership of this government: the state is broke, you have multiple failures on your hands, have the lowest credit rating in the country, and can't afford to build a new stadium. You were elected to Parliament to serve the people and businesses of Tasmania. Never forget that ...

We are headed for - and it's just a fact - an era of profound stadium austerity.

It's ironic that in the other place today they're debating a bill, the UTAS bill, which provides for rezoning of land north of Churchill Ave for UTAS to sell so it can earn some income expected to be around \$100 million to chip in towards its STEM facilities. The state government is not making a contribution to the university's STEM facilities. The state government is pouring money into a stadium we don't need, while the University of Tasmania will try to flog off land to self-fund its own STEM facilities.

Even in this year since mid-2025, there have been a plethora of news articles and commentary about stadium austerity, the cuts that are already happening, and the fact that they will be deeper come next May.

There was a story in the *Mercury* on 23 September about exacerbating housing costs; the story in the *Mercury* on 1 October about St Helen's private mental health facility facing imminent closure; also the *Mercury*, 4 October: Saul Eslake warns government infrastructure agenda poses a threat to the budget. Also in the *Mercury*, a story on 8 October: grants program to help new *Spirit* ferries disappears. October reporting the City Mission shed staff because of funding cuts. Another story in the *Mercury* on 15 October about a delay in providing the replacement breast screening bus. Another story the next day: 12 TAFE courses cut, resulting in lack of career development and jobs for designers, technicians, marketers, producers and craftspeople.

It is galling to hear people talk about the jobs and opportunities that would come from this stadium with references to being able to undertake courses and apprenticeships partly through TAFE - a singular focus on one class of worker. Wouldn't it be great if our focus on that group of workers was about pointing them towards building more social housing, for example? Essential social infrastructure, upgrading our health facilities, for example? No. There seems to be a view that the only good job here in Tasmania is one in a high-vis vest. I think that talented and skilled workforce could be directed towards projects with much more social value, but no.

More clippings: a lack of mental health support for veterans; TasCOSS criticising government decisions to limit funding of services in the budget; a story here with community services organisations coming out expressing concern about budget cuts to social and community services. Another story a few weeks later about social and community services fearing further cuts; in the *Mercury*, an article on 7 November about environment budget cuts where we saw, for example, in this year's state budget, across the forward Estimates, the axes taken to funding in the environment and climate portfolios; a story, union signals job cuts amid spiralling finances. Mr President, I could go on and on, but I will spare you that.

Savage austerity is coming and, regrettably for community representation, it will be very hard for any member of either House who voted or votes for this order to have any credibility criticising the government for not adequately funding public services, for sacking public servants or for hiking up taxes in the future. That is the cold, hard reality of it, as is the fact that this is not, as has been suggested in debate today, just the first step in a development application process for the stadium. It is the first and it is the last.

This debate and vote we are having today and tomorrow is the planning process, then it will be Mr Abetz and his all-powerful secretary of State Growth who execute the development of this project, who approve conditions and enforce them, if there is even to be such a thing, and that is a huge worry

As we established in Legislative Council Estimates, there's up to 220,000 tonnes of soil containing asbestos, lead, mercury, zinc, arsenic, cyanide and other potential chemicals of concern on that site. As was confirmed in the Tasmanian Planning Commission hearing last Thursday, it's uncertain that the TPC was told about that volume of contaminated material. What is certain is that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation is working to an environmental management plan for that site that was written in 2021 for the previous, widely consulted and popular mixed-use master plan and development of that site.

We have no reassurance from this government because they can't provide it, that they know how to deal with that level of contaminated waste. What we do know is that there is a cap on the Copping C cell of 45,000 cubic metres a year and that's the maths of it. As a citizen of this city who is here to work for and protect the residents of this city, I would like to understand how on earth the government, through Macquarie Point Development Corporation, plans to deal with that level of contamination on site in a way that doesn't pose a significant risk to public health. Presumably a significant proportion of that fill, for a period at least, will have to be stored on site and what a windy little site it is.

We also confirmed during budget Estimates that the minister for Macquarie Point Development Corporation regards the Davey Street upgrades for pedestrian improvements as unnecessary to the project. They're certainly unfunded. Again, when that question was put to

the Tasmanian Planning Commission panel last week, they said it is not possible to proceed with the project without ensuring community safety through those pedestrian improvements. So, none of these concerns are ameliorated or resolved in any way by the provisions of the order - an order which did not change between the enabling legislation, the draft order and the final order.

I reject assertions made by a number of members that people who are opposed to this stadium are anti-everything. We are fiercely pro-good-development in the right places. We are fiercely pro this beautiful Georgian Gothic city. We are pro the development of Macquarie Point under the previous heavily consulted master plan - a genuine place for people 365 days a year.

I note mention of support by the member for Elwick is contingent on government commitments. The member for Elwick says it'll be on the government to stick to the spending cap and meet conditions in the order. This begs the obvious and worrying question: if they don't, then what? By then it'll be too late. The blunderbuss will have left the station.

I noted the member for Elwick's tabling of an exchange of letters between her and the Premier in the interests of transparency. I respectfully suggest it would have been more transparent to keep Tasmanians in the loop as these negotiations were happening. I know that certain assurances have been made by the Premier. I know there's been about \$105 million worth of sweeteners, and I know that apparently there is a level of trust in Jeremy Rockliff's word.

Well, I take members back to May of 2022. We were the signatories to a tripartite agreement in support of the team. We feel passionately about this team, and I won't allow anyone to take that away from us. We've been fighting for this team for 20 years, since before Nick McKim was the leader of the Greens. At that time, when the bid went in, the Premier looked me in the eye and assured me the team was not conditional on a stadium. I am too trusting; it's one of my flaws. It's the same commitment he made to the public.

To this day, there's an August 2022 Australian Associated Press story on the AFL's website detailing the deceit in the both the headline and the lead.

Headline:

Premier confirms new stadium won't be part of Tassie's AFL bid.

Lead:

Tasmania confirms their formal proposal for the league's 19th licence won't include a new stadium ahead of a vote this month.

I will pause for a moment there to note that is in line with the AFL taskforce's advice and recommendations. They described a new stadium to support the team we've earned and deserve as a longer-term aspiration - perhaps, at a point, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, when we could afford such a thing.

Ever since the Premier told this first big lie to me and to Tasmanians, there have been promises after promises. Lie after lie.

The price of entry is cheap, but the club we belong to, of people who made the mistake of trusting this Premier, is getting pretty crowded. I respectfully reassure the member for Elwick that I will keep a seat warm for her in this club of broken promises. Sadly, Mr President, I expect to have her join us before too long.

There's been much commentary in the correspondence and emails we've received about both the major parties selling us out. There's been particular criticism of the Tasmanian Labor Party and its craven capitulation on this issue. Ever since Rebecca White lost the leadership, Labor has been as shameless as the Liberals and the *Mercury* newspaper in their unconditional support for this project, and it really has been unconditional. I have spoken to numerous Labor Party members, some former sitting members, who are disgusted. This issue has split and fractured the party because Tasmanian Labor is writing this government and the AFL a blank cheque.

**Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.**

## **MOTION**

### **State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 (No. 49)**

**Resumed from above.**

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Hobart) - Mr President, as I was saying before the break, in the interests of simply laying out the truth, which is one of our most important jobs as elected representatives, the Tasmanian Labor Party has signed a blank cheque for this government on this stadium. This is despite 11 years of wantonly reckless spending on the part of government, a government that is clearly inept at delivering on major projects and infrastructure projects like the wharf for our *Spirits*. Despite this, despite their faux outrage at the way the Liberals in government manage money, the Tasmanian Labor Party has given the Liberals a blank cheque.

I thought a lot last night, for obvious reasons, about what's important in a Westminster system. What's important is being able to stand up and speak the truth as you see it. What's important is being able to speak that truth on behalf of the people you represent. What's important is a strong and effective opposition in the house of government. Tasmanian Labor is a weak opposition. There have been no questions on the stadium, no scrutiny of this enormous project in the House of Assembly question time or in Legislative Council question time, I believe, since Rebecca White was toppled as leader. I stand to be corrected on that, but I believe that is true.

During the debate in the other place on the order, when the Liberals and Labor stood together to wave it through, there was only one speaker from our weak opposition on that order, and that was the Labor Leader, the honourable Josh Willie, member for Clark himself. If this is a project that's so darn good for Tasmania, why are other Labor members not prepared to stand up and defend it, not prepared to face up to their constituents on this issue? It's a reasonable question.

On scrutiny in Estimates across both Houses and four committees, our official opposition party asked not one question about the stadium. During the Tasmanian Planning Commission hearing, our official opposition started off the hearing by asking a few questions about

themselves and then asked no more questions of the expert independent panel on the stadium in four hours of hearings.

**Ms Lovell** - That's not true.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Ms Lovell, I take your interjection and I take it gladly. I always welcome interjections and in your contribution you are most welcome to correct the record. It will be interesting to see how many genuine questions, and not Dorothy Dixers, Labor will put during the scrutiny of this order. I believe, as do many of the people I represent, that Tasmanian Labor is betraying its own people, betraying people who count on a public health system that works for them, ambulances that turn up on time, help finding a home; all sorts of community supports relied on by people who've been supporting and voting for Tasmanian Labor probably all their lives. What a betrayal. Tasmanian Labor, our weak opposition, has sold out their people, their own people, through a great act of political cowardice. Never again will they be taken seriously when stadium austerity bites the people they were elected to represent.

The Greens, in the other place and in this place, have been consistent and strong on this issue since day one, just as we've been consistent and strong in standing in a tripartite way in support of Tasmania getting its licence to enter the national league. It is a fact to say we've earned this team. It is a fact to say we deserve this team. It's also a fact to say we've been shafted by the AFL who've asked this of Tasmania, the smallest and poorest state. It is so highly regrettable, bordering on tragic, that something we've all longed for, a Tasmanian AFL team, has become so divisive because it has been attacked by the Premier, by the Labor Party, and by the AFL, to the stadium.

Something that could have and should have united us is dividing us. This island, which for generations major political parties have been manipulating the people of, dividing us over land use very often, forestry, fish farms, canal estates; this was one thing that could have brought us together.

I, too, am a founding member of the Devils. I'm one of more than 200,000 signed-up members. I know that the Devils have players now on contracts. I know that we will enter the VFL next year. I know there are a lot of good people working with and for the Devils. It is just highly regrettable that the stadium and the team have been so cynically and inextricably linked. It didn't have to be that way.

It was not what the AFL taskforce set out in their report. They found that a Tasmanian team could be viable and sustainable. In making that statement, they did not link it to a brand-new stadium. They indicated it could be a longer-term aspiration. A state of a little over half a million people, with one big stadium in the south, Bellerive, and one big, quite handsome, being refurbished stadium in the north at York Park, and yet our Premier, who is supposed to be looking after the interests of all Tasmanian people, agreed without asking Tasmanians, without taking it to Cabinet, and certainly without asking Treasury, that we would have another brand-spanking-new stadium in completely the wrong place, as the evidence tells us. It is a matter of great regret that the Devils have been caught up in the toxic politics of this issue in this time.

I thank the independent expert members of the Tasmanian Planning Commission for their dedicated and thoughtful gathering of evidence, assessment, and making of findings and recommendations that were unarguable - unarguable, Mr President. They acted in the public

interest. I'd like to thank them for making the time to come and brief us last Thursday and answer any questions we might have. It was an excellent opportunity to learn and understand more.

In a way, it's my political naivety that I thought hearing from the experts themselves, having the facts established, might be persuasive enough. I thought, add that to the two credit rating downgrades within the space of less than a fortnight and surely an independent thinker would reach the conclusion that this stadium is the wrong project in the wrong place at the wrong time, at a price we don't know what will be yet but will certainly be unaffordable. That cost - we can't get away from this - will be carried by the people we represent. It doesn't matter what assurances the Premier makes. Any blowout in that cost will be carried by the people of Tasmania. It's in the AFL contract.

I want to thank Our Place, the community organisation which has spent the last at least two years working across the community, gathering information, sending us information, lobbying through democratic processes - all elected representatives, holding public rallies where people who felt so strongly about this could gather on the lawns - three large rallies over the space of two years; three rallies that filled parliament's lawns, organised by Our Place. I'm very thankful for the work that they've done.

I also want to thank the Tasmanians who wrote to us in their thousands - heartfelt, honest, informed emails, the vast majority begging us to do the right thing. Thank you again for engaging so respectfully and meaningfully in the democratic process.

I know there'll be heartbreak across the island if this order passes, and genuine fear for the future, where the weight of debt and underinvestment in our people becomes increasingly and painfully clear. I say to those people: do not lose heart. The Tamar Valley pulp mill, through a similarly manipulated and corrupted process, was also approved by parliament. It was also vehemently opposed by a significant majority, either on environmental or probity grounds. But it's never been built. The Tamar Valley today remains a place where the air is clean, the vistas are many and glorious, and the winemakers' grapes still produce the finest cool-climate wines in the country.

The struggle for our city, our people and our future - it continues. I will drink to that.

Mr President, I condemn the order that's before the Council.

[4.44 p.m.]

**Mr HARRISS** (Huon) - Mr President, I've mentioned this before, but for a member still serving an apprenticeship, this has been perhaps the most challenging, stressful, but ultimately educational issue that I've confronted. I've learned a lot about how democracy works. I hope that in doing so, I have been able to make my own contribution.

It's also important to note that, although the media has suggested that there are a couple of key Independents who will decide this debate, I don't believe that's true. There are no key members here. There are 15 members in this place who all have one vote.

I also put on the record that during the last three or so weeks when the debate has heated up a little, it's been suggested by some people via social media and through phone calls that my father would be turning in his grave if he knew I might not support the stadium. Having spent

considerable time with dad over many years and knowing him better than most, I can assure those people he wouldn't be turning in his grave. In fact, he would expect me to do precisely what I was elected to do - review, scrutinise and provide checks and balances on government proposals without fear or favour.

I'm aware that I'm not Robinson Crusoe, but to say that the challenges have been confronting would be putting it mildly. There is very strong support out there for the Devils, but the support for the stadium is far more mixed. My experience in Huon is that it's about 50:50 and the passions are strong on both sides. As I have observed before, that means that wherever I landed, I was certain to please half the people and upset the other half. You might almost regard it as a no-win proposition in terms of public support.

I doubt too many of us here stood for election to the Legislative Council because we wanted to chase popularity. I'm optimistic enough to believe that every member chose to stand out of a conviction that they could make a positive contribution to the welfare of their community.

Where it gets hard on issues like this is deciding which side of the ledger the public interest lies. That has been made much more difficult for all of us by the dictatorial demands of the AFL and the terrible way the government went about it. Essentially, announcing the decision and then starting to do its homework, the process has been back to front from the start.

As members know, I've played a fair bit of sport, albeit not so well. I am heavily involved in sporting clubs down home. I'm well aware of the widespread aspirations to have our own team in our national game and a new showcase for cricket and entertainment.

Members know, too, that I have been a consistent critic of the government's financial management. We've gone from having money in the bank to being deep in debt, with the trajectory showing even more red ink for the foreseeable future. Borrowing to look after ourselves today and handing the bills to future generations to pay with interest tomorrow is not the way to go about it.

I realise the stadium is infrastructure, but we have far too much debt and so the conundrum for me was always about whether I could be satisfied that the stadium could be financed and paid for without simply adding billions of dollars of new debt to the financial time bomb we would be leaving behind for our children and grandchildren.

I should note that, along the way, I have been left in no doubt that as significant as the funding requirement for the stadium is, it pales into relative insignificance by comparison with the broader challenge of bringing the budget finances under control.

I did not rush into this. I took my time to try to get my head around it but as I worked through the process, I came to the conclusion that before I could sign up to what could be billions of dollars of new spending I needed to be convinced that the government was fair dinkum about tackling the budget rather than the hollow promises and one-way trip to financial disaster we have been presented with so far this year: the dead, buried and unamended Barnett budget in May, and last month's treading-water Abetz interim Budget.

I also wanted some ironclad guarantees that the government was willing to address the out-of-control spending that landed us in this mess in the first place. That means making some

hard calls, including walking away from conflicting election promises and placing strict financial guardrails on the funding of future election commitments rather than simply continuing to ransack the public finances and adding the bill to the state debt.

I need to acknowledge the willingness of the Premier and Treasurer to meet me as I went through that process and developed my thinking along the way, and the access they afforded me to the head of public service and the head of Treasury to answer some of my questions.

Eventually, I decided that I needed to lay out my position and my concerns in writing to the Premier and Treasurer, and to invite a written commitment from the government in return. I will table both letters, my letter and the government's response, at the conclusion of my contribution. First, I would like to read in my letter because I think it explains pretty clearly where I was coming from. It's dated 30 November 2025 to Hon Jeremy Rockliff and Hon Eric Abetz:

Dear Sirs

I am writing to advise you of my current position on the Macquarie Point approval order, which is to be debated next week.

As you know, I have kept an open mind while I have been working as hard as I can to understand both the opportunities of the stadium build and the issues that it raises. I appreciate your willingness to meet through that process, and the briefings you have arranged, including with your departments.

I am a foundation member of the Devils and, like the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians, I am a strong supporter of the case for our own team in our national game.

However, the stadium is a more complicated question. The process which has led us to this point has been, in my view, unnecessarily divisive and far too narrowly focussed.

The abrupt displacement of the widely supported MONA vision for an Aboriginal Truth and Reconciliation Park without consultation or consent was reminiscent of the brutal colonial land grab, the deadly consequences of which it was intended to commemorate.

The dismissal of concerns of veterans' organisations over the impact of the stadium on the Cenotaph disrespects the sacrifice of those who were killed fighting for our country and the freedoms we enjoy.

The exclusive focus on Macquarie Point in preference to the Mac 2.0 proposal or other potential sites which could have avoided both those consequences is regrettable.

Nevertheless, I accept that the proposal subject to the order currently before the Parliament is the one we have, and I accept that a vote against the order

is likely to result in the withdrawal of the Devils' licence and the end of the AFL dream.

What I do not accept is that on current budget settings, we can afford the Macquarie Point stadium development. We know we don't have the cash to pay for it because we're already borrowing more than \$1 billion a year to pay for essential services like health and education. The Government has ruled out tax increases, so that leaves cuts in public services or even more borrowings on top of the headlong plunge into debt we're already seeing. Any new borrowings will be at a higher rate and thus a greater burden on our budget due to the recent credit rating downgrades by both Credit Rating Agencies.

The Eslake Report last August and the Treasury Pre-Election Report in June both pointed to a sharp deterioration in Tasmania's financial position and warned that explicit policy choices and immediate and sustained budget repair was needed.

Despite a series of recommendations in both reports, that financial repair was neither acknowledged nor seriously tackled in the November Budget. Instead, the deficit and debt is rising further, and as a result of the credit rating downgrade, the cost of borrowing is skyrocketing.

To approve the stadium in the face of that demonstrated government inaction on the budget would not be responsible. As you observed in 2017, Treasurer: 'It is absolutely reprehensible when this generation of leadership seeks to maintain its standard of living at the expense of the next generation, which will have to repay that debt with interest'.

However, saying no to the stadium would leave the legitimate aspirations of Tasmanians who support the Devils at the mercy of the AFL, which says without the stadium the licence will be withdrawn. That is not what any of us want, so I am proposing a series of expectations for consideration as I finalise my voting intention of the Order.

I am prepared to consider voting for the stadium, but only on the basis that I can be convinced that the Government, and by this I mean all current Ministers and party backbenchers are fair dinkum about ending its out-of-control spending and getting the budget back on track.

That will require signed commitments to specific actions, including the dumping of long-held but in the circumstances utterly irresponsible promises such as no tax increases. Billion dollar spending commitments have to be paid for. The days of using the public purse as a Liberal Party piggy bank must end. If it doesn't we'll go broke. If we need to call on the Australian government for support, it will clearly not be on our terms.

Given the unprecedented use of the public finances to pay for party political election promises and the resultant increase in state debt (at least \$5 billion in 7 years on my calculations), I also require commitments that will put an

end to the rorts, introduce guidelines for the proper allocation of taxpayers' dollars - particularly during election campaigns - and provide the Integrity Commission and Audit Tasmania with the finances and flexibility to enable them to discharge [their] critical integrity responsibilities.

## COMMITMENTS

I need these commitments signed by every member of the Parliamentary Liberal Party because every member has been party to the wild west ...

I won't read that in, but I've got 'The Government:' and then I've outlined some requests on there.

I will go to the government response now. This isn't read in from their response, but I've taken from it. Following discussions around a number of key points, I received a reply from the Premier and Treasurer yesterday. I know that the commitments in the letter represent the unanimous view of the parliamentary Liberal Party. As I said, I won't go into all of it, and members can read it for themselves, but in fairness and to give credit where credit is due, I think it represents a watershed in the government's approach to managing the books.

We have recent history to warn us that we need to see results before reaching a final judgment, and, of course, that is what we will be looking for. However, there are very clear signs of a sea change, and I can only conclude that that is the influence of the Treasurer, Mr Abetz. Some of the key points of the response to my letter include:

- the government has confirmed that the budget is unsustainable and the state's finances require immediate and sustained repair. That will include a serious look at the efficiency and effectiveness of spending to ensure taxpayer and communities are getting value for money, rather than simply throwing money at failed systems.
- the government has committed to implementing all but two recommendations of the Eslake report. One of the exceptions is the Eslake proposal for specific increases in state taxes and charges. However, the government has confirmed that in addition to the need to rein in spending, budget repair will require an increase in own-source revenue - in other words, state taxes and charges will increase. The government will determine ahead of the 2026-27 Budget where those increases will come from and how much they will raise.
- the government will develop as part of the May budget next year a new fiscal strategy. It has agreed it will meet a series of budget repair benchmarks and agreed that the head of Treasury will commission an independent financial expert to prepare a report for the parliament following the budget each year on progress in delivering budget repair.
- the government also has revealed that the stadium build will have a consequential impact on the borrowings of government business. The net borrowings of government businesses will be reduced by \$500 million over the next three financial years to offset equivalent borrowings for the stadium.
- the government has agreed to introduce in 2026 strict mandatory rules for the administration of grants, including grants made during election campaigns, ad

hoc and discretionary grant commitments, and grants made under the Premier's Discretionary Fund based on the rules currently applied by the Commonwealth.

It has also confirmed that the new rules will include compliance provisions that will apply to ministers and ministerial staff, as well as public service. In addition, the budget for the Integrity Commission will be increased by \$500,000 per year and indexed and the government will implement outstanding agreed recommendations of the 2016 Cox review of the Integrity Commission, ending a 10-year saga of inaction.

In my opinion the government's acknowledgement of the extent of the budget task facing Tasmania is crucial. It is a fact of life that until you admit you have a problem, you are not going to be able to resolve it. My concern, as I have outlined in the Chamber on a number of occasions, is that the government was refusing to recognise the extent of its financial issues and certainly failing to deliver on its repeated claims of a pathway to surplus, thus raising questions about its capacity to finance the stadium.

A big part of the problem was the Liberal Party policy commitment to no new taxes and no increases in taxes which, in my view, precluded comprehensive action to deliver budget repair, because it prioritised policy purity and the narrow interests of the business community over the obvious need in the wider public interest to generate the money needed to pay for rampant spending.

The gap between rhetoric and reality has been plainly obvious for some time. If we go back to the Eslake Report in August 2024, Saul Eslake said that the budget was not sustainable and recommended a 26-point action plan including lifting state taxes and charges. The government rejected that out of hand. It said it continued to hold a policy position of no new or increased taxes, a commitment it had made to the business community during the 2024 election campaign. Fast-forward to the 2025 state election and the Liberal Party's fiscal policy said this:

- sustain Tasmania's low-tax regime.
- no new or increased taxes
- state taxes to remain efficient, fair, simple, and stable.

Once again, it's refusing to accept the need for additional revenue to help the budget repair task and, in my view, leaving the capacity to finance the stadium in a questionable position.

The unanimous response of the parliamentary Liberal Party to my letter turns that on its head and, in my view, introduces a new and much more realistic approach to repairing the state's books. Not only is an increase in state taxes and charges back on the agenda, but the government has also agreed it will identify where the increases will come from and how much they will raise in the lead-up to the 2026-27 Budget. In other words, we finally have both an acknowledgement of the extent of the problem and a statement of real intent to do something about it other than simply adding billions of dollars a year to state debt. No doubt it will be painful and no doubt the business community will regard itself hard done by as a result of what appears to be a clear breach of yet another election promise. Welcome to the real world where billion-dollar spending decisions have to be paid for, not ignored or added to the tab for someone else - our children and grandchildren - to pay.

There is another key admission in the government's response: the consequential impact of the stadium build on the state's infrastructure program. We have been schooled on the background to this by Mr Eslake, who queried our capacity to finance the biggest infrastructure program in the country relative to the size of our economy. What we know now is that the government has cut \$500 million from government business borrowings over the next three years to offset the stadium spend. We don't know where those reduced GBE borrowings will fall, or what will be delayed or simply not go ahead, which is a worry. At least it is a signal that under the Treasurer, Mr Abetz, the Pollyanna approach - just keep spending and damn the consequences - appears to be a thing of the past. That is a good thing.

While we can and should argue about priorities, spending on its own is not a problem provided those doing the spending ensure we have a capacity to pay for it. I have a real problem when spending runs out of control, with no attention or capacity to pay.

I welcome, in particular, the government's commitment to restore funding to the Integrity Commission and to implement its 2022 recommendations to clean up the administration of government grants programs. I see this as absolutely vital if we are to ensure that this round of budget repair is not followed by a popular slump back into the rules-free spending rorts which got us into this mess in the first place.

By my calculations based on Treasury estimates, unfunded election promises have cost the budget \$5 billion over four elections since 2018. The Integrity Commission reported on the problem in 2022, pointing out that it was essentially a free-for-all with no rules applying to election promises, which the commission labelled 'indirect electoral bribery'. The commission recommended we follow the federal grants rules, which set mandatory standards for grant programs and ensure that they apply to ministers and ministerial staff, as well as the public service, and aim to deter the deliberate rorting of public finances during election campaigns.

The government, of course, took no action and the public purse has since been ransacked repeatedly to pay for party political election promises, which have helped drive the massive debt problem we're dealing with today. The government's confirmation it will belatedly act on the Integrity Commission's 2022 findings will restore the commission's budget and will implement the remaining agreed Cox review recommendations to give the commission the financial power and flexibility to do its job is fantastic. I congratulate the government for that, though I note the \$500,000 increase is less than the Hodgman government cut from the commission's budget in 2014 and, as a result, its funding in real terms will be more than 30 per cent below where it was, while the cost of government generally has doubled.

Mr President, all of that brings me to where I have arrived at regarding the stadium. I will be voting to approve the order. That might be a bit of a puzzler to some people, given the concerns I have expressed over the trajectory of the budget. However, as I see it, the issue is clear cut. My concerns will be the lack of action and lack of serious commitment on budget repair, despite the obvious deterioration in the state's finances. The result has been debt piling on debt, really and until I received this letter, no real evidence of resolve on the government's path to do much more than pay lip service to budget repair.

Announcing that you have too many public servants with an ambition to achieve a reduction seven years down the track looks like something out of Sir Humphrey Appleby's playbook, not a serious budget repair plan.

The announcement of the pathway to surplus somewhere in the mythical distance, with all the financial markets heading in the wrong direction, is no more reassuring, but the announcement that the government has scrapped its no new taxes and no increased taxes mantra and will increase taxes in the May budget next year, together with a serious look at the efficiency and effectiveness of current spending to ensure taxpayers and the community are getting value for money, brings in a whole new ball game. The fudging and the pretence are gone. We're back in the real world. That will be painful but if we are going to spend, we need to accept that we have to pay.

The Treasurer, in his former life as a senator, summed up the consequences of the alternative option of putting it on the credit card when he said, and I quote:

Too often, governments and parliamentarians, aided and abetted by elements in the media, think that public office is simply about tickling people's ears, getting their votes and spending their money.

This is contemptable, shallow and dishonest.

Government does not have any money of its own. It either borrows it, or it takes it out of the pockets of our fellow Australians. It is absolutely reprehensible when this generation of leaders seeks to maintain its standard of living at the expense of the next generation, which will have to repay that debt with interest.

It's hard to disagree. As I see it, the problem isn't spending so much as the refusal to face the consequences of spending, making sure we can pay the bills. The stadium is going to be expensive, no question; however, it's not the biggest financial problem we have. The rate of growth in the cost of government services is a far bigger challenge. Yes, the stadium bill does send a message that money isn't a problem when we know that is not true. Money is a big problem, but sometimes you need to reach for the stars.

There have been plenty of analogies bandied around, but I cannot help thinking that the one most appropriate was President Kennedy's 1961 announcement that America would put a man on the moon. That was outrageously ambitious, way back when a lot of air travel was still in propeller-driven planes. It was also outrageously expensive, but Kennedy took the plunge and eight years later, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

I see the Tasmania Devils as our moonwalk, and the stadium, warts and all, as the way to get there. I seek leave to table two documents and have them incorporated into *Hansard*.

**Leave granted; see Appendix 1 (page 223).**

[5.12 p.m.]

**Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke)** - Mr President, it gives me great pleasure and a sense of pride to speak to this order today. I recognise the significance of this issue for Tasmanians and that this decision comes down to so few of us here. I'd like to recognise the engagement that we've all had with stakeholders and ordinary Tasmanians and the large number of representations, calls, texts, emails, face-to-face meetings at shopping centres, on doorsteps, at

our community organisations, our sports clubs, and at places like the Shoreline Hotel, which I have joked is my very own free focus group.

I place on record my thanks to my electorate officer, Jimmy, and to all member support staff both out in the electorate and in here who have also been placed in the epicentre of this decision, and acknowledge the comments made by members of this place led by the member for Mersey yesterday morning. No matter where people land on this issue, we should respect their processes and their comments today.

**Ms Rattray** - Through you, Mr President, they've been taking a lot of phone calls at our offices when we've been here. So, that's been really appreciated.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Absolutely, and obviously if they're stuck on the phone for an hour, the calls come through to this place, and that's why I wish to recognise everybody involved. We have all done our best, I am sure, to communicate with the people we represent. However, it is fair to say everybody always knew it is the words today that will mean the most.

I will be voting yes, and I support the Macquarie Point roofed stadium because it will be good for jobs and the economy, give young people another reason to stay in Tasmania, and it will secure the future of the Devils club and the teams that come with it.

I would like to give a shout out to the person who made the sign on Sunday that somehow managed to rhyme roof with youth. I believe it will change Tasmania for the better. It will change attitudes within our state, but also towards our state. Sunday was a momentous day in Tasmanian history: 15,000 Tasmanians came here and said 'yes'. Just like the day that Tassie knocked off the Victorians at North Hobart Oval, I feel there'll be more than 15,000 people who claim they stood outside this magnificent sandstone building on 30 November 2025 in the years and decades to come. It was a day unlike any other I've experienced in this job. The poor weather created a cauldron. The rain made supporters more determined than ever. The build-up was electric; it was hard not to get swept up in it. In fact, as I found, it was much better to embrace it.

This project means so much to Tasmania: thousands of exciting new jobs in construction, the sports industry and event management, business confidence for our tourism and hospitality industries to invest, and the realisation of a dream for so many Tasmanians to see us take our rightful place in the national competition of our great Australian sport. This has been a long road. I can remember the numerous campaigns when I worked at the *Mercury* in the 2000s to get this team going. Today, I recognise my former coworkers: those hardworking editors, sports editors, reporters, graphic artists, photographers, copy assistants, and indeed, downtable subeditors still digesting their souvlakis, who helped make this happen. I also acknowledge the work of others who have campaigned for a Tasmanian side over the decades, however they have done it.

I fondly recall, when I was a bit younger, taking some of the first 'It's Time for a Tasmanian AFL Team' stickers to the mainland and putting them on dustbins in the hotel rooms or dorms in Melbourne, and maybe on a couple of traffic signs. I can remember watching on the news the work of MPs and business and community leaders of all persuasions working tirelessly to get up a Tasmanian team over the decades. I remember wearing the map t-shirts designed by me on MS Paint - please don't sue me now, Devils club - with a group of friends from this state when we met up overseas, as Tasmanians of that age so often do. When I got a

photo in front of the Reichstag in that map t-shirt back in 2011, little would I have known how much politics and sport, particularly Tassie footy, would cross-pollinate later in my life.

Our history of top-level footy in this state is strong. I can remember Fitzroy in Hobart. I came with my mum to Hobart to watch Geelong play Carlton at North Hobart Oval in a preseason game in the mid-1990s. I used to go to the Hawks and Saints in Launnie all the time, and have been a member of the Kangaroos at Bellerive. I love taking my kids there now, and I look forward to going to watch Richmond at Ninja Stadium for the next two seasons.

However, none of these are a club of our own. This club is more than one singular AFL team. It's AFLW, VFL, VFLW, and all the physical and social infrastructure that will be built around that, the jobs that will be built around that, the investment in infrastructure, and the sense of pride. It is a mindset. Tasmania can and will match it with anyone when the playing field is even. Just like the Tigers men and women I've had the pleasure to see in person lift trophies in the heart of Pembroke, like the Hurricanes teams, like the JackJumpers, and I'm sure teams like the Devils will in the future.

I understand and respect the position of those who oppose this. There's plenty of often-cited reports, but I will be honest: they're starting to take on a world of their own. It's almost like everybody has a document that they believe in. I guess people do say football is like a religion. They're evidence that informs our decisions, but as anyone from local government will tell you, they're not infallible. Arguments about heritage, space and size are subjective. Speculation about bus fleets isn't of much help at all. As we heard from the Leader early in this debate, the parking, traffic, pedestrian movement, noise and environmental impacts can all be effectively managed.

I'm yet to see evidence that this stadium cannot be built. Indeed, in my own information-gathering, there's not an argument that hasn't been countered. To that end, it's why we support the next stage of this process - probably tomorrow when the answers can be put on the record to those questions. The truth is that cancelling one-off capital stadium funding will not fix the budget, and you do not borrow for operational expenses like health or education in a sustainable way. The money from the federal government, the AFL, the ongoing dollars all disappear without this project.

The \$609 million allocated to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation in this Budget represent just 12 per cent of the state's total infrastructure pipeline over the next four years. It is wrong to say that cancelling the stadium will resolve the budget challenges Tasmania faces. We need to invest in infrastructure. It's a core role of government to support economic activity. This state government's challenge has been its failure to get its infrastructure spending under control and its inability to deliver major projects on time and on budget.

I joined the ALP in 2006. I'm not a particular fan of Liberal governments. I don't have a ton of faith in them, as the scrutiny of the *Spirits* pursued by me and my Labor colleagues, when some told us we were barking up the wrong tree, proved. As we have already heard, we and others have held the government to account relentlessly on that project and in doing so, have helped to start to get this mess finally sorted out. We didn't do it by blocking the berth from ever being built. We see the stadium exactly the same way. We think it will be good for Tasmania and we will continue to apply the scrutiny needed to make sure the government delivers it properly, on time, and on budget.

I support the stadium, and I support the Devils. I also support the new *Spirits* and the delayed berth infrastructure. To say you won't scrutinise something because you support it is absolute dross. What do you do when a concept or project stacks up, but you have concerns about delivery? Guardrails help a lot. Labor established the Public Accounts Committee referral for the stadium to keep the government accountable and ensure honest management and expenditure on this project.

I strongly welcome the release of the governance, oversight and insurance framework which we were provided with last week to guide the delivery of the Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium. This document could have, in my view, helped settle this discussion a lot earlier, but it is better late than never. It's available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website and I urge people to read it. It's clear, it's dry, but it's transparent. It's not everything, but alongside PAC scrutiny, the involvement of infrastructure experts from the AFL in the delivery, and some of the commitments that have been provided to at least three members of this House in the past few days, or at least since the weekend perhaps, does give me a great deal of confidence that the lessons have been learned from the *Spirits* disgrace.

This is a stadium I want built as soon as possible. Like others who back this, the government has our support, but we cannot build it for them. That's why these commitments that I've heard today, or in the days leading up to today, this document, the PAC scrutiny, and the statements made with it, are important.

As I said, I understand that there are arguments being made against this opportunity. To those who continue to say we can still have the team without the stadium, as our Labor leader Josh Willie said downstairs, 'These people making these arguments are not listening, or choosing not to listen.' I think the member for Montgomery pointed this out - there's nothing in our engagement or briefings to say that this is the case. The AFL has been consistent in its position that the conditions of the licence are non-conditional. Those MPs who flew over to Melbourne earlier in October have now heard it directly from the AFL, from Tom Harley. I'm a Geelong supporter, I've never met Mr Harley, but I do wonder to myself if he ranks that meeting above or below memories of the 2008 AFL Grand Final. RIP the 2008 Cats.

The stark commercial reality for the club is, as it was said in the original Godfrey report, it will not be a success without modern infrastructure. I love Ninja Stadium. I love going there. It's served our state with distinction, but its days as a venue for the national stage are numbered. Now is the time to get on with the next stadium infrastructure for the decades to come, somewhere modern, where issues such as accessibility for Tasmanians with a disability has been and is being considered from the get-go.

As the local member on the eastern shore, nobody would like to see investment in - I've called it Blundstone in my speech - Ninja Stadium more than me if that were a genuine possibility, but we need to be real. It has very limited capacity for any further expansion. It's got constrained transport links and any further investment into the facility would be very short-sighted. We should also not pretend for one minute that the 18 clubs would not walk away from Tasmania if we do not deliver on the conditions of the licence, including the stadium.

I did quote this earlier in the year when we debated a motion on this topic, but as Eddie McGuire said on *Footy Classified* earlier this year, when asked if Tasmania should be careful what it wishes for, he said: 'If they're wishing to not have a stadium and not have a team, they

are headed in the right direction.' He concluded that if we stuff this up, the AFL will say, and I quote: 'We offered it to you, you signed up, then you said no. Ta-ta. No teams, participation going backwards, no economic benefits, no jobs, worse outcomes.' Reputationally, it will be difficult for our state to come back from this and we need to get it done.

Mr President, I'm going to deal with some things brought up in the debate by the member for Hobart, which I hadn't planned to do, but I will now. There was some reflection on other members of this place doing deals behind closed doors. I would probably refer to the aftermath of the lower House election this year, where there were a few other deals done behind closed doors between government and this party -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, standing order 99(5), Mr President. I had never said anything about deals behind closed doors. I ask the member to stick to what I said and perhaps reflect that in his contribution.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I will take that on board. If the honourable member can continue?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Absolutely, only nothing but the facts, Mr President. The comments about despite the government's failure being given a blank cheque by the opposition, it was the opposition that moved the no-confidence motion, that then the Greens party has said nobody wanted the election, even though they supported it and they talk about being taken seriously. Then we came back into this parliament and they were given confidence by that party. I also note the comments about supporting a team. Since 22 April 2023, and the media release is still on the Greens website, they have made their position clear. They don't support a stadium and since 2023, they haven't supported a team when they withdrew their support.

**Ms O'Connor** - You've misrepresented us.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I literally read it on your website 20 minutes ago.

They talk about scrutiny in committees and verballing people about their behaviour. Mr President, it wasn't me who didn't come back after lunch on day one of our scrutiny last week.

**Ms O'Connor** - What are you talking about?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Comments that we've been flooded with emails. I have a document here from Cassy O'Connor MLC urging Greens supporters to email Legislative Councillors. This is despite a motion we discussed in this place which specifically talked about not sooling people on, using electronic means onto their colleagues.

**Ms O'Connor** - I beg your pardon? We live in a democracy.

**Ms Webb** - I think all of us encouraged our constituents to make their voices clear to the members.

**Ms O'Connor** - Clutching at straws.

**Ms Webb** - Mr President, come on.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Perhaps I will just touch on one more; no, actually I will save that. I will probably come back to it. Mr President, I regret having to do that, but it's hard when you get constantly verballed during other people's contributions.

**Ms O'Connor** - Verballed? I wasn't verballing. I was talking about the Labor Party, not you.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I am the Labor Party.

Mr President, I will provide some other deputations. This is from the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union and the CFMEU:

Dear members of parliament,

The Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union and the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union together represent more than 15,000 Tasmanian construction workers, plumbers and electricians. We write to express our strong support for the Tasmanian government's commitment to build a world-class sporting precinct at Macquarie Point. This is a project of state significance. It represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create jobs, strengthen local industry and invest in the skills of Tasmanian workers.

The Macquarie Point precinct can be a catalyst for lasting benefits, delivering not just an iconic facility but also a pipeline of training, apprenticeships and skilled employment that builds the next generation of Tasmanian trades. Australia faces a serious shortage of skilled construction workers. Only projects of this scale, with clear commitments to local jobs and training can make a real difference.

We are determined to ensure this project delivers those benefits. We are working with the government towards a project agreement that will guarantee certainty, productivity and fairness for all involved.

We believe such an agreement should enshrine the following principles:

- ensuring the highest possible standards of health and safety on site;
- prioritising Tasmanian workers and apprentices in recruitment, ensuring upskilling throughout the life of the project;
- establishing a ratio for apprentices for every tradesperson employed;
- creating an industrial relations project steering committee to proactively manage workplace issues;
- developing a single project-specific enterprise agreement to ensure consistency, fairness and productivity throughout construction; and
- opening up the industry to greater participation for women.

These measures will ensure the Macquarie Point sporting precinct delivers on its promise - a world-class facility built by Tasmanian workers for

Tasmanians, leading a legacy of skills, safety and opportunity for decades to come.

Our members are excited by the vision of the Tasmania Devils representing our state on the national stage and equally by the chance to build the facilities that will make that dream a reality.

I will skip that paragraph.

We urge all members of parliament to support this project and to help ensure it is delivered in a way that maximises the benefits for Tasmanian workers, businesses and communities.

I'd like to go through some information about football in Tasmania. The AFL's \$360 million commitment to Tasmania is transferring football across the state from community clubs and pathways to facilities and participation. This is more than a one-time boost; it is a long-term strategy to build a sustainable and thriving football community across all three regions.

Some of the investment that's being made is:

- \$126 million for grassroots development and talent pathways through the first decade of AFL competition
- the establishment of regional talent academies in Launceston, Penguin and Hobart, plus a senior state academy to prepare Tasmanian talent for the VFL and AFL
- the appointment of a full-time girls' coach to strengthen female pathways, and the creation of the Tasmanian Communities Facilities Fund with \$500,000 annually supporting projects such as what's already been done or is in the pipeline
- the Windsor Park resurfacing and lighting
- Queenborough TCA foyer
- Kingston Beach and Cadbury change rooms
- the Huonville and Hillwood lighting and surfaces
- additional AFL funding streams for work on utilising existing school venues as community football venues and many other projects statewide.

Under Football Tasmania's vision for the future, the 2028 strategic plan was to get 28,000 registered participants by the first bounce in 2028. Following the announcement of the Tasmania Devils and AFL's investment, participation has surged from approximately 16,500 to nearly 24,000 participants.

In terms of the investment on the ground, more than \$1.2 million has been invested into the Premier League competitions and their clubs; \$500,000 has been committed for the Regional Talent Academy for 13- to 15-year-old boys and girls in all three regions of Tasmania. Participation staff has tripled, running school and community programs and supporting clubs statewide. Across 76 schools, 25,000 students have been engaged this year, and 146 visits to

schools have been made by AFL staff, and over 300 club visits, assisting with local Auskick and Superkick delivery.

I believe we've all seen the data about the improvement in participation in junior football. In 2024, growth was 27 per cent in total participation, and then in 2025 to date, 13 per cent. Auskick was up 38 per cent and then this year, 19 per cent. In school competitions, there are about 2500 children playing this year.

Tasmania was the first state in 2025 to exceed its overall participation growth target and is leading the way nationally across multiple programs. This was all made possible through increased investment into grassroots football, and I look forward to football hitting its 28 by 28 target.

The member for Montgomery quoted extensively from the deputation given by Lily from the TALS program, but I would like to provide a little bit more of that into the *Hansard* if possible. It was actually my favourite quote which didn't get in, so that's good. It says:

I sincerely hope everyone in their respective fields experiences the joy of an opportunity presenting itself, quite like this did for me. I can still recall the relief of finding this education program, being able to access a clear pathway right here in Tasmania.

Key learnings this year have come directly from guest speakers visiting the academy - all talented individuals from across a variety of industries. One constant across their stories was that as young Tasmanians, they felt they had to go interstate to pursue their education and careers.

What they wish they had then now exists here because of the Tasmania Football Club. The recent partnership with the University of Tasmania enables students to complete a Sports Business Degree within 18 months, creating yet more avenues for young people. This demonstrates just how the academy is driving progress in the state.

I genuinely believe that through this partnership, and with what the academy has to offer, that Tasmania will become a place that young people from other states seriously consider for their futures, too. It has and will continue to reverse the trend of young people leaving the state in search of education and employment opportunities.

She goes on to talk about:

This year I've travelled down from the Meander Valley every week for class, and my peers have shown the same dedication coming from the north and north-west. The Tasmania Football Club and the academy are for all of Tasmania, and in 2026 that commitment grows with the course expanding to Launceston. For those who may never have considered the behind-the-scenes work of professional sport, they now have it within reach across the state.

As part of my studies, I have travelled interstate to visit both Optus Stadium and Marvel Stadium to experience working operations firsthand, seeing the

scale, precision and atmosphere of those venues, whilst learning directly from industry staff who have worked across venues around Australia, including Tasmania, and who have highlighted the functional limitations of our current venues for major modern events.

Experiencing these match-day operations has made it unmistakably clear how far Tasmania can go with the right facilities. It has strengthened my belief that we require this stadium. To retain world-class professionals in Tasmania, we need to provide them with a working environment that offers world-class standards. We want to work in environments that we are proud of and that we aspire to work in.

The stadium has been a prominent talking point for students in my class, most of whom are aged between 18 and 25. Frequently, we discuss the great impact that it will have on Tasmania, and importantly, the excitement and the message of ambition it brings for our futures. I can confidently advocate for those in which I have had numerous conversations with who find themselves weighing up options for study, career opportunities, and their future in Tasmania. The resounding theme is always the same: the stadium represents progress.

This year, I've visited community football clubs across the state, meeting locals who have shared their club's story, pride and history. Being new to the game, I don't come with a lifelong deep love for football itself, but I've quickly developed a real respect for and strong belief in Tasmania's football legacy and its deserved place in the national league.

Since the announcement of the Tasmania Devils, we've already seen measurable impact. Participation is rising, pathways are expanding, and local clubs are becoming stronger and more connected.

One of the most exciting parts of this journey is that Tasmania is building an AFL and AFLW program side by side from day one. No other club has started both elite competitions for men and for women at the same time. The Tasmania Football Club is leading the way in gender equality in sport, and setting a national example.

This is why the infrastructure is vital. As a student shared with me, the stadium will provide the facilities needed for Tasmania to compete on a national stage. It gives the entire program the best chance of long-term success.

The stadium and the Devils are not just about football, they are about creating opportunity, strengthening identity and ensuring the future of Australia's game is genuinely inclusive and equal.

She goes on:

The passion that surrounds the Tasmanian Football Club stems from well beyond football. This is reflected in the extraordinary calibre of staff who have committed to this opportunity for Tasmania.

Many have relocated with their young families as they too see the potential of impact here. From a student perspective, observing and learning from individuals considered leaders in their industry who choose Tasmania has given us self-belief in our own future. It may sound cliched, but there is truth in the idea that you can't be what you can't see. Now in Tasmania we can see it, as will future aspiring athletes, musicians, sport administrators, leaders, Tasmania's next generations.

I will finish this deputation with the statement that building the stadium will not drive young people out of the state, but failing to build it almost certainly will.

Mr President, we've heard from leaders of business, workers, industry groups, from construction, from hospitality, from people in tourism, from young people, from cricket, who think they can triple their membership. I did agree with the quote from Hospitality Tasmania President Ben Carpenter in *The Examiner* yesterday when he said;

'No' proponents want to keep us small ... they don't want to see the state grow and prosper.

And I believe that comes from fear. I believe that sometimes we're a bit fearful of reaching our full potential in this state.

I first ran for Clarence Council in 2018 and the catalyst for this was a series of wonky head-scratching decisions from the council which was perceived as more interested in dry reports, out-of-touch decision-making and not having any real gauge in the community. Of course, we need to consider evidence and seek answers, but we also need to be making decisions that are relevant and in touch with our communities.

On that point, because of events earlier this year with the prorogation of parliament, I didn't get the chance to properly thank my constituents for returning me to this job only a few, not so short, months ago. I'm proud to be in here representing the views, or doing my best to represent the views, of people who live in Pembroke. I agree with the comment from Mr Hiscutt earlier about necessarily this issue having to be a campaign issue, but during that campaign I gave everyone the same answer when it came to the stadium. I support it because it will create jobs, give young people another reason to stay in Tasmania and secure the Devils club.

I ran a very pro-stadium campaign and my word, did some people have a bit to say about that. You could cue consternation from many commentators, particularly on AM radio, none of whom lived on the eastern shore, I should say, predicting my political mortality. There were significant bitter and personal campaigns from others, both on social media and in mailboxes. In a field of five, my vote went up, and I won every booth, and I haven't heard much from those people since. Maybe they drove off the road when a seagull ran into their windshield. If you know, you know.

Now, I don't claim that every single person who voted for me supports this as strongly as me, but you can't do much more than make your position clear and follow through on it, so I can stand here with confidence. My community backs me when I back this stadium.

There will be VFL and VFLW teams for the Devils running out next year and there will be a stadium starting to be built, I'm sure. I feel much of the opposition to this project will fade away like Homer Simpson into a shrub soon enough when that happens. If Tasmania doesn't deliver this stadium now, our reputation will be in tatters and we'll be left without the Devils club we deserve and all the benefits that come along with it. The cost of not building the stadium and losing the Devils, I don't think our reputation will ever recover from.

As a woman I doorknocked in Geilston Bay said to me, 'If we keep saying no, people are going to stop trying to do things down here'. It has not been an easy process for anyone but if we get this right, I believe we are on the verge of the togetherness that this state hasn't felt.

I would like to acknowledge, and I did touch on it before when I was talking about the campaign, the toll on our families. I would like to also reflect my thank you to my family, both here and a few hours away, for their patience with me in a pretty busy year.

After considering all the evidence and all views, ultimately a decision here is like sport itself: who are you lining up with? For me, the choice is as simple as it is exciting and, indeed, I believe momentous. I'm here today and I'm lining up with progress and with the future. I'm lining up with those who support jobs and the economy. I'm lining up with our young people and I'm lining up with the Devils. I support the order.

[5.46 p.m.]

**Mr VINCENT** (Prosser - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr President, I've changed my presentation a bit today as the day has gone on. I recognise the amazing research and statistics, figures and quotes that have been given here today and appreciate this is a very passionate subject. I would like to take a slightly different view which explains some of my thoughts and passions towards always having supported the stadium along the grounds of economic reasons. I do recognise a lot of the numbers, as big as what they are, are scary to some but as an economic driver, I see this is very important. I will touch on those things as we go.

Shortly, I will come to some of my lived experience in what sport can achieve. Although I probably look more like a sumo wrestler these days, I have had a very long and varied life in sport.

First, I'd like to thank the members of this place in acknowledging these last few weeks where it has been physically challenging for me as I limp, hobble and crawl around this place and gradually move towards my knee replacement next Tuesday. I thank everybody in the House for their courtesy.

I'd like to thank the Leader too, for taking this motion through on behalf of the government.

I'd also like to show and pay my respects to the thousands of people who have emailed and phoned. I know everybody has acknowledged the efforts of staff, but the discussions that we've all had in all walks of life, in supermarkets, pubs, clubs at all hours of the day and night

have been amazing with the passion involved in all that. Regardless of where you sit in this debate and argument, I'd just like to acknowledge that.

I've been the minister for Planning for 15 weeks and whilst working through a number of issues through this time, one of the most significant was to work on this order.

Members from both Chambers engaged with us in the spirit of which I hoped we were working on the assumption the project would proceed, and on this basis what we were planning, specific issues can be worked through. I was pleased with the engagement and thank the members of this place and the other place who participated in those discussions.

We took a lot on board, and we made a lot of changes as a result, and I'd like to thank Mr Matt Healey and Mr Craig Limkin for openly supporting this process.

Macquarie Point Stadium is a generational opportunity to invest in Tasmania for the benefit of future generations. While I respect the views and concerns of all those in this place and the wider community about the project, there are some facts which cannot be denied.

This project will transform an industrial wasteland into an entertainment precinct for the benefit of all Tasmanians to enjoy sport, entertainment, cultural events and conferences. Importantly, this project delivers what generations of Tasmanians, current and past, have dreamed of - the Tasmanian AFL team, the Tasmania Devils.

Contrary to the claims of those who oppose this project - that it can be rejected and the deal with the AFL can be renegotiated - a roofed stadium at Macquarie Point was a condition applied by the AFL clubs through their presidents for entry into the national football league. If this opportunity is denied, the opportunity will be lost, probably forever. Like many Tasmanians, I want to get on with building this infrastructure in order to generate the economic activity investment it will deliver.

It is said this project has been the subject of more scrutiny than any other in the history of Tasmania, including projects such as the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam and the Wesley Vale pulp mill, both of which I'm old enough to remember quite vividly.

What is different about this project is there's been a grassroots, overwhelming movement that sprung up in support of it. This movement has vastly outnumbered those who would see it scrapped, along with all the other dreams and aspirations. This was seen in the massive show of support at last Sunday's rally outside this building. The event was truly inspiring for all of us who attended, including myself. We heard about the economic benefits which will flow in our business community, sparking economic activity and investment in our state, such as interstate visitation and the civil construction industry.

The government has confirmed it will apply a great deal of rigour to the construction and funding of this project. This is important for any project, and the government has already announced we will reform Infrastructure Tasmania to provide whole-of-government oversight in delivering major projects. This is particularly important in the context of this project because of its size and importance.

As I started off by saying, I've been involved in sport nearly all my life and have seen many transitional moments in that time. As a kid at primary school in Latrobe, I saw the great

Darrel Baldock - a pretty good footballer in his day, they tell me - turn sleepy little Latrobe, then 2800 people, into the powerhouse of the NWFU, winning four premierships in a row and runner-up in the next two. Everyone went to the footy. Everyone in that town had passion, commitment, and the businesses supported one another. Sponsorship flowed and it transformed Latrobe into the most amazing place to grow up and play sport. It was electrifying in a little place like Latrobe.

During high school and early into my youth, I was heavily involved in rowing and eventually moved into the Tasmanian Rowing Council as property officer and part of the organisation for organising the World Rowing Championships at Lake Barrington. I can remember everybody at the time asking, 'Why are you wasting money on a rowing course at a lake at the end of the world?' We had people come from Europe who quite often stated that you're going to get a shock how many people from Europe and America follow rowing. The island's going to tip up on its head and the lake will drain. It didn't quite happen that way, but it was interesting what a world-renowned sporting arena, or in this case rowing course, did for the transformation of that area of Tasmania.

I was a food rep then in the township of Sheffield - quite amazing. The pub up there was a thriving country pub that was very proud of its three roasts that it put on every day of the week and the five or six vegies you got served with it. I took a chicken Kiev in there one day to introduce them to something new, thinking that the rowing championships are going to come. They told me where I could stick yuppie food like a chicken Kiev. I made the mistake a few weeks later of taking a seafood basket in there. I think I wore every bit of that seafood basket. I wasn't going to give up. A few weeks later I took in a 5-kilo bag of pasta, thinking all the rowers love pasta and they needed pasta. We needed to get pasta onto the menu. I won't use the words they said to me, but they quite politely told me what I could do with that Italian food.

But over time, they changed. The international people and the national people who flooded into that area of the state to make Lake Barrington one of the best well-known rowing courses in the world was absolutely phenomenal. I can remember one of the photos I took - I can't remember what year it was, but around that time was a picture of the World Championships, and that picture I took ended up on the page of the 004 telephone book back in those days. I was quite proud of that, to see all those people enjoying the rowing. It transformed Sheffield - a tiny little town, not dissimilar to what Darrel Baldock did with Latrobe. The rowing course certainly did that with Sheffield, too, and the murals became part of that.

It was quite interesting to see that a lot of the businesses that were owned by locals thought, 'We can't handle this', so they sold out to mainland people, and four years later, they had to buy them back at five and six times the price because business had boomed so much and they wanted to get back in on the action.

I might say, having visited the Sheffield Hotel a few times over the last 12 months, it continues to be a thriving activity of people enjoying an ale or two and a beautiful counter meal - and they do have a wider range than just the meat and veg these days.

**Mr Hiscutt** - Get a Kiev, that's for sure.

**Mr VINCENT** - Marvellous how economic drivers can take over a whole town.

Closer to home, when I was mayor of Sorell, everybody thought it was a good idea for Pembroke Park. It was a simple little sports complex that I saw as a regional hub. The government supported me after I did a lot of planning and talking to them about it being a regional hub and not just a local sporting ground.

When I took the job on, there was just football, cricket and Little Athletics using it. The average was 200 to 300 people a week using Pembroke Park. With not a real lot of money - with federal and state, probably in the vicinity of \$12 million or \$14 million - it now caters for: netball, which has gone from five teams to 28 teams; basketball with more teams than I care to count; pickleball; soccer that's growing and now in state league; women's footy with more clubs than I'd like to count; horse riding; cricket, which has expanded with women's and men's and the Nepalese people playing down there; men's footy is still continuing to grow; and Little Athletics.

The best estimate is that about 6000 people a week use that complex, and it's gone from being a little old sports ground to being an economic driver for mum-and-dad sport. If you want to play high level, you come into Clarence, Hobart and Glenorchy, but for the area from Swansea down, Nubeena up, and out through the Coal River Valley and to Seven Mile Beach, it is the hub of activity.

When sporting events are on there, which is almost every weekend and during the week, every shop is flat-out. Every pub is flat-out. Those businesses are now putting money back into those sporting clubs for junior people to develop, for mums and dads to enjoy their sport - with their children most of the time, too. You do see some of the mums and dads running off to have a fag on the side and then back onto the court. Some old habits don't change. It is a hub for the whole south-east.

Once again, this is where my mind was going about economic drivers and what you need to do to make benefits for everybody in our community.

Here in Hobart, we had a little thing called Mona that everybody wondered about. I know it's not government money, but a heap of private money went into that. I'd hate to know how much money they spent there, but that has transformed Hobart and brought people from all over the world because of the significance of what they do there and the difference that it is. I'm glad the government didn't have to pay for that one; I'm really pleased that David Walsh and his family spent untold amounts of money to transform Hobart, not just in the summer months but also during the winter months. Who would ever have thought that a poo machine, or some of the other interesting displays that I won't talk about, would draw people from all over the world to Tasmania? We forget how significant some of these things are for Tasmania.

Recently, we've had the JackJumpers. Every time you go to a JackJumpers game, the first thing they say is, 'I wish this stadium was twice as big so we could all get a ticket.' What would have happened if that arena held 15,000 people, instead of 6000 or 10,000? How successful would that club have been, on top of the success they've already had?

Everybody must find it amazing to walk around town and see kids of all ages, parents, and even grey-headed old people like me, jumping up and down saying, 'Go Jackies, go Jackies!' all the time. Everybody is on board with the Jackies, and this is the sort of thing that you can drive when you get that balance between sport and driving the economy in place. It is a beater all the time.

The rally on Sunday drove it home when you walked around. I was in town for a meal that night, and as I left at 8.30 p.m. there were still people all through Salamanca, out on the lawn here still, with placards supporting the stadium. The pubs, clubs, restaurants were all still packed and doing well. Now, 15,000-odd people there. That's just a small gathering at this new stadium. Imagine when it's 23,000 people, how the streets are going to be locked. Do you know one thing? The traffic was no different to a normal weekday coming in and out of town for a very short period, so that means to me that we can handle it, we can do it - and that was with no great planning or thought behind it.

There are a lot of economic drivers around here. When I started to think about David Walsh, I also started to think about people like Chas Kelly, who started as a clerk with Holymans: I can remember - I don't like to remember how many years ago - I was an apprentice at the time, and he saw a vision that was able to start his business, which he still operates from the same building with the same amount of passion he's always had, but he had faith in Tasmania to drive an economic value to this state.

You think of people like Kerry Gibson, who's in his late 80s now, but he is still the first one to work at half past four every morning, the last one to leave for the night, with Tasfreight. Once again, he was a young man who started working with my dad at the Golden Fleece depot at Horsehead Creek in Devonport as a 16-year-old and has now gone on to have an enormous trucking empire all over Australia, and loves Tasmania. He never wanted to move from Tasmania. He sees the benefit. Unfortunately, he's a very passionate Carlton supporter, but he keeps going.

Royce Fairbrother, another Devonport guy. I can remember when Royce started and bought his first business and I believe it was off a guy called Max Buchanan. It was a little joinery shop at the back of a little block in Ronald Street in Devonport. Look where he has gone with his wife, Thelma, and what they believe, putting their money into Tasmania and driving the economy.

Mr President, my hope, passion and vision is for this stadium to deliver aspiration and inspiration for all generations to come. I look forward to the continued contributions from members here, but I sign off by saying, go Devils.

[6.02 p.m.]

**Ms PALMER** (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - Wow, what a journey our state has been on.

Mr President, many facts and figures have already been placed on the record, so I won't be repeating those comments, but I would like to place on the record my respect for the members of this House. Each one of us represents our electorate and each one of us is the voice in this place for our community. That's not just on this, that's on every motion; it's on every piece of legislation, on every order that comes our way.

You cannot deny the passion of our state from either side of this particular debate. We hear words of genuine concern around debt. We want it, but we can't have it right now. We must be realistic. Then there are the words of aspiration for our youth dreaming big. We see esteemed individuals on both sides of the argument, each with convincing narratives. Our community has stepped up with such a mix of opinions. A fear that an opportunity will slip us

by, a fear for what our future debt situation might look like, and the impacts of both of those options.

As with many of the matters that come before us as elected members, our communities come to us sometimes united but more often than not, divided in their positions. That's normal, and this has been no different. We've certainly seen great debate across all political lines, across all ages and across all parts of the state.

As the member for Rosevears, I've met with, had coffee with, and heard from members and voters for each political party who can't understand the position that their party might hold. I had a young builder tell me that he was concerned about the debt that would come with the stadium. Then I had an 84-year-old woman who is a Facebook warrior in support of a stadium. I've always been incredibly moved by stories. I've always been a huge believer in the power of stories, and I've loved the contributions from other members today that have incorporated other people's stories. As part of my contribution today, I want to share three stories from three Tasmanians. These are not the only stories that have come to me and shaped this debate, but they are three stories that took me by surprise.

I would like to begin with a teenager from Exeter. I met this lovely young woman a few years ago through her parents. Steph's a happy, normal teenager who has her ups and downs, like all teenagers. She finished up at school and then became interested in turf management. When it comes to sports turf management, we know a professionally maintained playing surface is essential to many sports, both at the elite level and also at the community level.

Steph began working locally at different sports grounds, learning her trade, and she's now in an apprenticeship. She has thrown herself into this career pathway with great determination and drive. When having a catch-up one day, Steph spoke about her ambition to one day take care of and maybe even manage the turf at the stadium. We often hear about the possible jobs that will come if this stadium is built, but this was the first time I'd given consideration to the complexities of turf management and the job opportunities that would come with that. I was so proud to hear from this young woman and to see that she had her eyes set on the big time right here in Tasmania. She wasn't looking at other famous grounds around Australia, but her focus was on the possibility of a world-class venue in her home state.

One of the great joys of being the Minister for Education is the opportunity to visit our schools, spending time with principals, teachers, school staff, and especially with our students. Conversations range from the innocence of our tiniest students who ask questions and speak without any filter - they're the best conversations - right through to the conversations of the deepest nature with some of our older students who might be wrestling with what their future might hold for them and the decisions that they are trying to make.

Just a few weeks ago, while visiting one of our amazing schools, I met a year 10 student. Georgie was an absolute powerhouse - energised, driven, and ready to take on the world that lies beyond the school gate. She was proudly showing me the landscape work she'd been doing at the school as she'd been participating in the school's learning-by-doing program. This year, Georgie had also undertaken work experience in the construction industry. Obviously, the company she joined for that week had come to the same conclusion I came to - that this was a very special young woman. They offered her a construction apprenticeship for 2026. She spoke of this opportunity with such pride in herself, and her teachers and principals were sharing in that pride and in that joy.

As she was sharing this journey with me, she blurted out with such enthusiasm that she really did believe that she might actually get to work on the building of the new stadium. A Tasmanian teenager wanting a career in the construction industry and the stadium is part of her dream. I asked Georgie if I could share her excitement in parliament and she agreed.

Two amazing teenagers. Two amazing young women. One heading into construction and the other into turf management - both looking at what opportunities this multipurpose precinct could offer them.

I would now like to share a story that I believe will stay with me for many years to come. On 7 November 2023, I had the privilege, as the Minister for Disability Services, to attend an art exhibition at the Long Gallery in Salamanca. The event was hosted by OnTrack Tasmania, which is an NDIS provider. Each year, OnTrack Tasmania celebrates the artistic endeavours and talents and creative flair of people with disability through its annual art exhibition.

On this particular occasion, the theme of the event was 'reimagining the future'. There was an array of artwork, including one that was titled *Lady in Red*, which I actually purchased as a gift for one of my Legislative Councillors for Christmas. The artwork that really drew me in was a piece by a man called Vince Poole. Vince has a rare form of dementia. By any means, dementia is a cruel condition and its impacts are not only on the person diagnosed, but the family and friends.

This was in the early days of the multipurpose stadium conversation, but Vince had been inspired by the dream of a stadium, so he painted an enormous artwork titled *Hobart's Monumental Arena*. The piece was taking up the entire wall in the gallery and it sat under a spotlight. In Vince's words:

This artwork visualised Hobart as the home to the world's largest and most awe-inspiring stadium. *Hobart's Monumental Arena* inspires us to dream big and reimagine the city as a global hub for entertainment and sporting events in the future.

These were the words that were written on the information card that sat alongside the artwork that was displayed in the Long Gallery. I was told at the time that the reason behind Vince creating this artwork was that he wasn't sure he would remember the journey of Tasmania's stadium by the time it was built. He wanted to have his stadium moment before that moment could be taken away from him. I also purchased that artwork and I gave it to the Premier that same Christmas. Now, Vince's reimagined future hangs in the Premier's reception room.

The stadium is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take a big Tassie dream and to turn it into lasting opportunities for generations to come. We have dared to dream big, and now it's time to turn the vision into something real. In every conversation I've had with my colleagues - the Minister for Parks, and Sport, will know, and the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport will also know - whenever we're discussing a new park development or a new transport opportunity, I will loudly lobby to ensure that accessibility and inclusivity is front and centre and at the beginning of every conversation. After all, to be inclusive is one of the cornerstones of the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act*, and I carry the intent of that act with me every day and with all that I do.

What does this have to do with Mac Point? Today, I want to share the perspective of what accessibility and inclusion will look like at Mac Point. This is a place where we're not just building a stadium; we want to build a sense of belonging, a place where every Tasmanian can feel at home, where every Tasmanian can feel ownership. Macquarie Point Stadium is being designed for everyone. From the moment you arrive, enter and enjoy the venue, careful consideration has been given to the ease at which this can happen, because great experiences should be accessible to everyone without exception and shouldn't come with challenges.

The plan is to see a continuous step-free concourse, meaning you can come in any gate, find your seat easily, and move freely around the venue. No detours, no barriers: just a smooth, welcoming path for every person. One of the most powerful elements of this stadium is the choice it will offer. Accessible seating won't be tucked away or treated as an afterthought. It will be available right around the ground so people could choose the view, the atmosphere and the experience that suits them best. Whether someone uses a wheelchair, a mobility aid, a pram, or simply benefits from more space and support, the stadium's layout is designed to make every visit simple, dignified and comfortable.

Thoughtful drop-off zones, smooth pathways, and easy connections to public transport will make arriving and leaving safe and stress-free, even on the busiest event days. Because true inclusion means meeting a wide range of needs, the design incorporates features such as changing places facilities, quiet and sensory rooms, and rest areas: spaces where people can take a moment, where they can reset and feel fully supported throughout their visit. The stadium isn't just a venue; this is a community space.

Yesterday, I received an email that I believe was sent to all MLCs. It was from Lee Bullock, a proud and passionate Tasmanian and described as an outstanding Tasmanian. Lee was hit by a car when he was five years old, which changed his life forever, and he's been a quadriplegic as a result of this accident. He actually wrote and produced a campaign song for the Devils. I want to read part of the email that he sent. These are his words:

I'm a quadriplegic. There are restaurants in Hobart I cannot enter, there are footpaths I cannot cross, there are buildings I will never see inside because nobody thought about people like me. Macquarie Point is not just a sports project; it's a social infrastructure. It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to build something from the ground up with true accessibility. Inclusion is not a nice extra. It is a legal expectation, a moral responsibility and a test of who we are as a state. If the stadium falls, disability inclusion in Tasmania will be set back 30 years. I cannot put this more plainly. This is our chance to lead the nation in accessibility, our chance to show every disabled Tasmanian they are not an afterthought; they are part of this state's beating heart.

I thank Lee for sharing those thoughts with all the members of the Council.

Yes, as a mum of football-mad sons, and as the mum of a dancing queen daughter, I am excited for them to see just what is possible in our small but mighty island state. I am also excited for what a multipurpose precinct means for all who will come through its doors. We know the feeling that comes when you're at a game or you're at a major event and you're part of something that's actually bigger than yourself. It's the feeling that I had when I was standing on the sidelines in Victoria recently as I watched the New Horizons Diversity Inclusion football

team win its third AFL open football title in a row. This flagship national event is an opportunity for footballers with an intellectual disability and wheelchair players to participate.

This year also saw the inclusion of a wheelchair team from the RSL and a blind and low-vision exhibition match with players from the Victorian Blind League. The joy, the camaraderie, the spirit of watching these wonderful young Tasmanians from our state take the premiership home was incredible. I was messaging the results through to our Sports minister as we boarded home in the final quarter.

Yes, there were tears and inappropriate language. That feeling is also belonging, and everyone deserves to have the opportunity to be part of it and we can have it right here in Tasmania. That's why ensuring the stadium design features accessible seating, comes with companion seats and excellent sightlines is so important, because this way families, friends and carers can all sit together and cheer together and create those wonderful memories together, the way great moments are meant to be shared.

Universal design is at the heart of this project: wide pathways; clear, wonderful signage; step-free circulation; accessible facilities; and this will make the entire precinct easy to navigate for people of every age and of every ability. Here's the thing: accessibility doesn't just support people with disability. It makes the experience better for every single visitor. When you design with inclusion in mind from the very beginning, everyone benefits because inclusion means being part of big moments, and that's what we will see at the stadium. That's exactly what this stadium makes possible. It's a place where Tasmanians will be able to come together and when everyone will belong.

When I arrived at my parliamentary office on Monday, a handwritten letter was sitting on my desk from a Tasmanian lady who is opposed to the stadium. It was a lovely letter. It was beautifully written, it was written in a polite and really respectful way and she was expressing her concerns. I read really carefully, just as I've read and considered the hundreds of emails that have come to my electorate office. I put on record my thanks to my electorate officer, Melissa Hill, who has been the one at the forefront of managing that. There was one line in this beautiful handwritten letter that really did stand out to me. This lady wrote: 'I urge you to please listen to your heart and follow what is the morally right thing to do. Please,' she emphasised.

The thing is, Mr President, it's my heart that would not allow me to vote any other way than in favour of a multigenerational project such as this stadium. When you stand at a crossroad and people's opinions are coming at you left, right and centre, when you know that you cannot please everyone, when you know half the people will be disappointed by your decision and another half will be happy, it has been my experience that in those moments you have to bunker down, you have to look inside of yourself.

It has been my experience that when you do stand at a crossroad and it is today my choice to actually follow my heart. I want this for my children, and I want this for my state.

Mr President, I support the order.

[6.21 p.m.]

**Ms LOVELL** (Rumney) - For members' information and those who are here in the gallery with us today, I will be making a short contribution and then we'll be moving to adjourn the debate for a break.

Mr President, Labor's position on this order is clear and it has been put on record both in the other place by the Opposition Leader, Josh Willie, and here today by my colleague, the member for Pembroke. I don't intend to repeat anything unnecessarily, but I do want to make a short contribution to the debate.

I would like to start by joining with other members in acknowledging and thanking my electorate officer, Tahnee, and the parliamentary staff here. All our staff, as others have noted, are the ones who are faced with the phone calls; most or many of them are filtering our emails, the members of our community coming into the office, certainly in Tahnee's instance, and I'm confident to say all our electorate officers have handled that with dignity, grace and strength, and it's important that we acknowledge that.

My contribution is not intended to justify our position or to try to counter any other position because there are very valid arguments on both sides of this debate. Isn't that why this has been so difficult for so many people?

I want to thank the members of my community who have sent in the many emails that I've received. I know some of them have been read into the debate today. I could read some, too. There have been many for, many against. I could find just as many in support of the stadium as against, but I don't want this debate to become a contest of how many emails came in and who has more. We've all reached our decisions. Every member in this place has been diligent and thorough and considered, and I don't want this debate to deteriorate into that kind of contest.

There's been a lot of conjecture about the Labor Party and our processes in this debate. As recently as last evening, a member from the other place posted on social media about an apparent division in the Labor Party on this issue. There's been talk of party lines, not for the first time and certainly it won't be for the last, and calls for conscience votes. Like the minister before me, I've had emails imploring me to be brave and to vote with my conscience against the order. However, I want to be really clear about this: there is no amorphous party instructing us how to vote. There never is. We make every decision we take in this parliament together as a group, every one of us with equal opportunity to voice our opinions. We don't always agree on everything, it would be pretty unhealthy if we did, but we make our decisions together. I'm a member of the Labor Party because I have Labor values and I believe in the power of being part of a collective. That's also why I'm a unionist.

We all have a role here. I firmly believe there is an important role for Independent members, especially here in this place. That doesn't mean there's not a role for me or for the member for Pembroke or any other member of any party.

I will never cast a vote in this place I'm not prepared to justify. Not everyone will agree with that justification or with my decision every time, and that's okay. We can disagree, but the idea that I've been instructed how to vote is wrong and, frankly, insulting.

I want to address a couple of comments that were made in an earlier contribution by the member for Hobart, who asserted that Labor had not asked a single question, either through the Estimates process or in the parliament, on the stadium. I want to correct that.

I note I was able to find this with a quick search here at my desk in the Chamber during this debate. That quick search of *Hansard* has found at least 10 questions - I found 10; there

may be more - 10 questions asked in the other place. There were questions asked in the Estimates hearing with Mr Abetz, the Treasurer; and in the House of Assembly by Mr Winter. There were questions asked by Mr Willie, a number of questions.

On 24 September, it was the Labor Party that successfully referred this project to the Public Accounts Committee for oversight.

I'm not here to labour the point. It doesn't really matter what we say. If others choose to wilfully misrepresent our actions and our position, there's nothing to gain by doing that. There's nothing for me to gain by standing here and talking about it at any more length. However, I did want to put that on the record.

The last point I want to make is along the lines of what other members have already spoken about, and that is the deep division that exists in our community on this issue. Among the many emails I received about the stadium, one really stuck out to me. It was an email from someone I know personally. I've known him for a long time. He said he'd emailed all members but had hesitated when he got to me, because he knew me from a bit of a previous life and he felt a little weird about it.

He was against the stadium and he knew I was voting in support of it. Thankfully, he decided that I had the political broad shoulders it takes to manage this, and so he emailed me his thoughts. It stuck with me because it really illustrated for me where we've come to with this issue: a place where people think twice about what they say and to who. What a shame that is. We ended up having a really lovely email exchange. We disagreed, but it was entirely respectful, and I'm so pleased he did decide to email me.

Are there differing opinions in the Labor Party on this? Yes, of course there are. There are differing opinions in every community in Tasmania, in households, in relationships, in families, in the Liberal Party, probably within the Greens - and I'm talking about rank and file members here. There are differing opinions across the entire state. I've had people tell me about how they can't talk about the stadium in their own family because of the depth of feeling from differing viewpoints. I've deliberately used that phrase 'differing opinions' rather than 'division', which has commonly been used, because I don't think it needs to be framed that way and I don't think it's helpful for it to be framed that way. In fact, it contributes to the way people are feeling on this.

One of the reasons this decision has been so difficult to make for so many is that it really feels like a no-win situation. No matter what decision is made, at the end of this debate there will be people all over the state who are deeply affected by that. It's such a shame, and I really believe it didn't have to be this way. There are valid arguments on both sides. There are pros and cons on both sides. Would there be benefits if we cancel this project? Of course there would be. Would there be disadvantages? Absolutely. Will there be benefits if it's approved? There absolutely will be.

Amongst all the many, many emails we've all received, I hope members had the chance to read an email that the member for Murchison referred to in her contribution earlier today. That was the email from Dr Richard Benjamin. I won't read it all in, because the member for Murchison already did that, so I will read parts of it. The part that really stood out to me was:

... 'Moral injury' refers to the distress that arises when people feel betrayed by events that violate their core values. First used in military settings, the idea applies more broadly. Guilt, shame and anger are common responses, and the effects can run very deep.

In Tasmania's stadium debate, highly polarised positions have emerged. For some, the stadium is vital - not only for sport and business, but as a symbol of hope and aspiration for our young people. For others, it represents money diverted from urgent priorities like education, health and housing. Both perspectives may be held with great conviction.

Further on in the piece, Dr Benjamin goes on:

Perhaps the hardest part of this debate is the division it has created among Tasmanians, where none existed before. The remedy for moral injury, moral repair means acknowledging harm, making amends, and finding ways to reconnect. In other words, looking after one another.

Regardless of the outcome of this vote, I believe this needs to be a focus for all of us moving forward. The remedy for 'moral injury' means acknowledging harm, making amends, and finding ways to reconnect. In other words, looking after one another.

We have to acknowledge the harm this debate has caused and both sides of the debate share responsibility for that. All of us have a role to play.

Making amends: I'm not yet sure how we do that, but I will keep reflecting on it, and finding ways to reconnect, looking after one another. Let's hope, whatever may come in this debate, that we all find ways to look after one another as humans who share community, share spaces and share a genuine desire for Tasmania to be better.

Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

**Debate adjourned.**

**Sitting suspended from 6.32 p.m. to 7.35 p.m.**

## **MOTION**

**State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025 (No. 49)**

**Resumed from above.**

**Ms LOVELL (Rumney)** - Mr President, I had finished my contribution and look forward to hearing from other members.

[7.36 p.m.]

**Mr DUIGAN** (Windermere - Minister for Sport) - Mr President, I can say at the outset what a pleasure it is for me to speak in favour of this order that we have before us today. I certainly note, as others have done before me, the scope and the scale and the magnitude of the decision which we are all grappling with here today. At the outset, in terms of voting with one's heart, I'm absolutely in here voting with my heart for this order. I have been a believer and a supporter of this project since its inception. However, I do accept I have had the benefit of a great deal of information, and I've seen the work that has gone into it and been taken very closely along that journey. Perhaps that has helped give me comfort for what is obviously a challenging decision, as is evidenced by members' contributions today.

As you know, I am the Minister for Sport and this is about the Macquarie Point stadium precinct, but it is inextricably linked with the Tasmanian Football Club. I therefore welcome to the Chamber Kath McCann, who has been sitting there all day. I make the point that nobody has done more. We are here today faced with a decision, and it's been a big thing for us for the last few weeks and months. Nobody has done more, I would argue, to advance the cause, to sell the optimism, to sell the joy, the hope, the enthusiasm, and what the future might hold for the Tasmania Devils Football Club than Kath McCann. Kath, welcome and thank you.

I feel the weight upon some of my fellow members here today as they've grappled with this decision over time. I applaud them for the way they've gone about it, for the assurances they have extracted from the government, of which I am part. I think we would all agree that good governance, good oversight, and on-time and on-budget is the absolute aspiration for this project.

We are asked to make a decision and look at a big project and, potentially, a legacy. One of the things we seek to do as parliamentarians, potentially, through our time - however long that may be in this place - is to leave things in a better place than we have found them. I recognise there are competing interests in that space, but this opportunity is certainly one that charts a new path for Tasmania, for its people and, of course, importantly, for the generations who will follow.

On Sunday, as has been referenced by others, to stand out there in the rain with thousands of other Tasmanians and to feel the shared sense of purpose and to be there to say 'yes' to something, I think was very gratifying indeed and very unifying. We have had plenty of experience - and I won't denigrate anyone who gets out there to express their point of view, but to be there en masse saying 'yes' felt, as I say, very gratifying and a feeling of momentum for the project.

This is obviously more than a building, and it is more than sport. We are capturing what has been a long-held aspiration of Tasmania for decades. Some of the great names in Australian football are Tasmanian players, but ultimately and inevitably, they have had to travel out of our state to have the careers that they have had. We're on the cusp: we are embarking on a journey to make that no longer the case.

I truly believe we will see people, Tasmanians, walking taller as a result of what we are seeking to do here today, and that's at the very highest level, and that's what this is about. It's about the Devils, it's about the Hurricanes, it's about Australian cricket, it's about big conferences: that's Macquarie Point, but this begins across every footy club from Smithton to Huonville to wherever you like.

In my role, I get to drop into the odd sporting club. I reflect on a time earlier this year up at George Town for the under-14s training. They're out on the ground and the kids are fired up, and before they got into their training, having the opportunity to talk about this, about the AFL team. You can see at 14 that not everyone's going to make it to the AFL, but you could sense and you can see and you can feel the excitement that this brings in that club environment where the kids and the players are one thing, but everywhere you look, there are coaches and trainers, first aid officers, team managers and administrators. Then come game day, you've got the umpires and the match managers, and the function organisers, the sponsors, and all the coordinators and all of that.

As I say, that's in every footy club, whether it's George Town or Huonville or Smithton, across the state. That transcends through our NTFA club, through our SFL clubs, up all the way. It is that pathway, the bringing on of the Devils, the AFLW and the AFL team, and, of course, the VFLW and the VFL team - we will have that full runway from community sport all the way up to the elite level. That is such a powerful thing and that has been the missing piece for so long here in Tasmania.

We will have our stars. I'm a big fan of the Geelong Football Club for the next couple of years, and then I will not be. Occasionally I've had the opportunity to speak to their inspirational captain, Patrick Dangerfield. I say, 'What do you reckon?' He said, 'Just get it done.' I know it's a lot more nuanced than that. There will be Tasmanian players of that ilk just up the road, training down at Kingston, playing over here. They will be in our community, and they will be on the back page of the paper. That will be so powerful and culturally so important for us.

There will be, supporting those players, those men and women who take to the field, a whole plethora of other staff and new jobs and new roles, importantly, for young Tasmanians to fill, whether they're the physios or whatever it may be. We haven't had that. We've seen it a bit with the JackJumpers, but we haven't had that. It's more. I will probably say this a few times, but it's more than just football. It's the club doctors, the physios, the content creators, and the media managers. It's all of that, because sport is an industry.

As Lily was saying in her contribution the other day, Tasmania hasn't been particularly well represented in that space for a long period of time. We're small, we're growing, but this is a seminal piece in that puzzle. Grade 10 students at school in Tassie, if you wanted to be a sports administrator or something like that, you were going elsewhere. That was how it was, and this order before us, while it is for a building culturally has the ability to change all those things. I won't embarrass you anymore, Lily, because I know a lot of people have gone there, but thank you for your contribution the other day. I was really pleased to see it, and I thought it was quite powerful in demonstrating that wider remit of this stadium.

The government is committed to delivering transformational infrastructure at Macquarie Point. This is obviously a piece of infrastructure that is capable of hosting much more than just games of Australian Rules footy, other major sports, concerts and events infrastructure that, of course, will come at a cost. It will, but it will create thousands of jobs. It will drive the economy for decades to come and that's such an important point.

Today we are confronted with the decision that needs to be made in one day. We have had a few weeks or a few months leading up to it, but this is a decision that will have ramifications for decades. In terms of reconciling the cost of this, I think it's important that we

raise our eyes and understand that this, for the next 50 years, will be a huge economic driver for our state and particularly for this city.

The other thing I believe is worth dwelling on for me is the notion of having the team without the stadium. I believe that's largely been debunked and people have tested that with the AFL. Certainly, in any engagements that I have had, it has been completely unambiguous that without the stadium there is no team. It's been characterised as the AFL bullying us and being terribly mean to Tasmania, but I think it's important to understand that the stadium is pivotal to the ongoing economic success of the team.

There is a very strong, almost irrefutable, correlation between off-field success and on-field success. A strong bottom line leads to a strong on-field performance and it is irreversibly true. The stadium drives, in large measure, that metric, and data provided by the AFL shows that traditional market clubs generate, on average, 50 per cent of their income from their stadia on match day. There are examples all across the league. The Adelaide Oval is particularly instructive in this case. Port Adelaide was struggling, let's say that, and its revenues are up 130 per cent since moving from Football Park to the Adelaide Oval. For the Adelaide Crows, a big, powerful, rich club, its revenues are up 63 per cent and that's true also in Western Australia, where the Western Australian teams have seen significant uplift since moving to Optus Stadium.

I will go back to the mighty Cats. I do see a strong correlation between Tasmania and Geelong: similar-sized populations for our state and that sort of region, one team, one stadium and having a 10-year upgrade program to that stadium at substantial cost has seen that club be able to exit out of gaming machines and things like that, standing very proudly on its own two feet.

I will, with Kath's indulgence, tell a story which has been told by Brendon Gale and I have told it here before. In terms of what stadium infrastructure does, if you look at teams that currently play at Marvel Stadium, take St Kilda or North Melbourne as an example, and they play the Gold Coast Suns at Marvel Stadium in front of 23,000 people, they make about \$100,000 on that game at that stadium. Geelong plays the Gold Coast Suns at GMHBA Stadium in front of 23,000 people and makes \$1 million. That's the difference between what a good stadium deal looks like and what a suboptimal stadium deal looks like, and that would be the case for us, otherwise.

The stadiums elsewhere in the country generate those opportunities that we would see here: the cafes, the restaurants, the urban development, and the urban renewal that we so rightly want to see for Macquarie Point, which for much too long has been an urban wasteland.

The stadium proposal and a strong stadium deal is deeply and closely correlated with on-field performance. We want our team to hit the ground running, to be successful from day one, and we want to set it up to be successful. That's really important. If we're going to do this, let's do it right. Yes, it is coming with some cost, and nobody is blind to that fact, but if we do this a bit halfway then we are setting ourselves up to fail. I don't believe that is what we have fought so long and so hard to have Tasmania represented at the highest level to do that, to have us go in at anything less than our best opportunity.

Macquarie Point is a stunning opportunity for that location. There's been talk that the site's not big enough, and the government's response to the order shows there are various

stadiums around the world which exist on much tighter footprints. It can be built and it's a great location. I believe it's widely accepted, if not particularly well known, that about the most important metric in stadium infrastructure is the proximity to the CBD. Hobart and Macquarie Point have that in absolute spades. There will be games of football, and the waterfront will be packed with people before the game. They will go to the game, they will walk down in that great style, and these are games that typically will be happening in winter, and we all know that Tasmanian tourism and the visitor economy need events in winter. They will go to the game and then they will roll back into town, and it will be from a business activation space so important, because we know that Tassie has a great reputation as a destination.

In speaking to club presidents, they are all very confident their supporter bases will travel. Tasmania has a great reputation, and we know in terms of events what the yield of that is. It's 5 to 1 in terms of what we see. Across 155 events supported by the government in 2024-25, 113 events contributed to bringing over 129,000 visitors to our state and generated over 742,000 bed nights: an economic impact of hundreds of millions of dollars.

For AFL football we have really good metrics over 25 years of having Hawthorn play in Launceston. We know and we see the uptick in economic activity of the footy games in Launceston as there will continue to be, but it won't be Hawthorn playing Adelaide or Port Adelaide or the Gold Coast, it will be Tasmania playing Collingwood. That's a different ball game.

Tourism is just one part of the events story. Events also create excitement and entertainment as well as those economic, employment and social opportunities; they drive our sense of place and garner pride and allow for our involvement in so many ways, from arts and sports to business, food and beverage. It has been discussed, but this stadium does give the state that ability to attract larger conferences, which is something that is missing from our arsenal now in terms of the business events. I heard today that the industry is a \$34 billion industry around the country. Having a venue that allows those types of events to come to Tasmania with all those tourism offerings will enable people to see Tasmania's parks and go to a conference and stay a little bit longer. We know that delegates who come to conferences typically stay five nights or thereabouts, but to be able to scale up and get a slice of those 1500-people conferences, which is a slice of the market that we're not participating in already, is very important.

In terms of the cost of the stadium and reconciling that, an important thing to consider in that equation is the amount of that \$1.13 billion that will be spent here in the local economy - paying tradespeople, paying concrete providers, paying the painters and the decorators, and the people who will build this thing. Conservative estimates would say \$269 million will go into the Tasmanian economy - pretty localised here in Hobart - and 1500 direct and indirect jobs. That can't be understated and I think we've heard in terms of people making contact with us and speaking publicly - trade unions and the high-vis army that will see a direct benefit from that. Fifteen hundred direct and indirect jobs have a massive flow-on effect to the local area. It's important to recognise that it's not just money that's being sent elsewhere. There is a very large spend here.

We should also talk about the level of funding that will come into football, and we know that the AFL will be making considerable investments into the club's ongoing funding, and into the grassroots game. We are already seeing very substantial increases - and other members

have gone into some detail about participation rates - in junior football, which is going to be so important. We will have academies in the north-west and in the north, and we will have the high-performance centre in Kingston.

I should mention that the DA was approved for the high-performance centre on Sunday night by the Kingborough Council - another step in this important puzzle. That's a very large development in concert with this in Kingborough. As I was saying, boys and girls are flocking to their local clubs as the excitement builds. That's ahead of VFL and VFLW next year, 2026. I remember as a sports journo back in the early 2000s going out to cover the VFL team and it was a big deal. I expect we will see that ramping up of excitement as the VFL sides play in that competition next year.

I won't labour the point about junior development and the upticks we've seen there, but a 77 per cent lift across the state with the southern region at 140 per cent. I know on the north-west coast, the Superkickers are absolutely flying. It is a really encouraging, aspirational level of people engaging with the game and it won't just be football.

Another really important milestone that was reached recently was the heads of agreement with Cricket Tasmania to have their commitment to bring content into the venue and to allay their concerns around shadowing on the field of play by some clever imprinting on the ceiling bags, or the roof bags. That is such an important thing. We need this stadium to deliver for all our sports and be the epicentre of peak and elite sports in the state. We will see the next generation. Hopefully we will see Test cricket here. I am told, I believe reliably, by people who know that the Indian Cricket Board and the English Cricket Board are very interested to see what happens with the Macquarie Point stadium as to whether Test cricket can be played here. Obviously, it comes with the guarantee that if something is scheduled, it will be played, and that's a very powerful motivator for people who are scheduling large sporting events and other things. Cricket has seen substantial growth and we understand that Cricket Tasmania has some exciting plans in the wings. That is an important piece of the puzzle. As we contemplate our decision today, it's helpful to have that assurance from cricket that cricket will be played in the stadium.

Again, the stadium provides the impetus for investment into our regions, significant investments into UTAS Stadium, \$130 million going in there. We've heard about the upgrade of Dial Park in the north-west and, as the AFL confirmed, there will be three academies starting for our under-12s in three regions of the state. Can you imagine the excitement for the first cohort of kids taken into those under-12 academies around our state? For those kids, not to necessarily be dragged off, but having those regional centres is so exciting as well.

We know that the new club will have priority access for Tasmanian players and that pathway. When we all go to Macquarie Point inevitably to watch the Devils run out in 2030 or maybe 2031, and Tasmanians are running through the banner in that stadium, it will be outstanding. I look forward to that.

There have been some comments today in regards to the government's handling of this. I take this opportunity to pay a special mark of congratulations and respect to the Premier. We often hear people lamenting the fact that there is no leadership with vision and that takes - I promise you, it's easier not to build this. I promise you, it's a whole lot easier to say 'We can't deal, we will play two games at Bellerive and that'll be that and that's good enough for Tasmania'. Well, I don't think it is good enough and a lot of people agree that we should

have a team. We should have a team that's successful. We should have a team that has excellent infrastructure supporting it. To do that takes a lot of guts because this has been a controversial project. It has, no question. It takes someone to stand up and carry it forward. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Premier for his courage and belief in the project. For the next 50 years, this will be a time that we look back on and say, 'What were we thinking that we were going to let this opportunity go by?' I don't think so.

The Macquarie Point stadium is critical for the Tasmanian Football Club's success on and off the field. It will underpin its long-term viability. We must go forward with delivering the dream that Tasmanians have fought for and that Tasmania deserves.

This is a decision that Caleb at the George Town under-14s footy club will be very pleased to hear; and for Stella, who kicks her rolled-up socks down the hallway at night and practises her handballs. It's for the college kids thinking about what they might do as a job. It's for my daughter, who has great aspirations for a sports administration role and is currently studying for that in Melbourne. It's for the accountants, the business managers, the photographers, the chefs and for those who never thought that these kinds of jobs would be available to them here in the place where they live. This is for all of us.

I thought on Sunday that David O'Byrne made a lovely remark about how there were lots of grey-haired people at the 'yes' rally, in regard to comments that have been made about the 'no' rally the week before. That's true. It doesn't matter what your age is, whether you're grey-haired like me - well, 'no-haired' like me - or you're a kid. This is one for us all.

It's not just a building. This is an important point: it's not unusual that this is controversial. Stadiums, wherever they have been built, are controversial. They are, inevitably, always. It's not unusual that it has required some deviation from the local planning scheme. Stadiums, wherever they are, require that. The local planning scheme doesn't consider buildings of this scope and scale.

It was great the member for Pembroke talked about Sunday a bit. I was there in the rain, in my Tasmania guernsey, and after the rally, I thought, 'I'll go and get some fish and chips.' It was a bit cold and I thought, 'Yes, I'll wander down there.' Anyway, I wandered down and it was such a great thing. Everything was heaving, all the pubs were heaving. The opportunity and everywhere you'd go, people would stop, they'd see you in your Tasmania jumper, and you'd have a chat with people. 'Yes, it was good', 'What are you doing now?' 'Waiting for the bus to go back to Launceston', and all that sort of stuff.

People have talked about the moral injury of making this decision and I think, what will it be that brings us together and what will it be that brings us healing? I would say that these buildings, these stadiums, these teams have the ability, have that promise of bringing us all together.

It was a really rare - and I would say quite a new - feeling to walk down the Hobart waterfront, wearing my Tasmania jumper with the big map and the T on the front, to see everybody else wearing their Tasmania jumpers with the big T and the map on the front. We were a team, and that was permission to speak to people you'd never spoken to before. We worked together as one, and that was 15,000 people.

This has been divisive. I really appreciate what others have said about making it okay for whatever decision people get to. I noticed, with great interest, the WA Premier the other day, Roger Cook, who I believe was in vehement opposition to the Optus Stadium in Perth, come out and apologise for his position and say that he'd now come around to fully supporting the venue. I think, ultimately, that's where we'll all find ourselves.

I have no hesitation and, with great gusto, support the motion.

[8.09 p.m.]

**Ms ARMITAGE** (Launceston) - Mr President, in 2023, at my last election, I was often asked about my stance on a roofed stadium at Macquarie Point. I stated then that I didn't support the AFL's requirement of a roofed stadium at Macquarie Point. To change my mind and go back on what I told people at the last election, as I pointed out to the Premier, I would have to have overwhelming evidence that I was incorrect in my opinion of the stadium. If I couldn't explain to people in my electorate categorically why I'd changed my mind and provide evidence then I couldn't support the stadium at Macquarie Point. That doesn't mean I don't believe there would be a need for a stadium at some point at another location, preferably without a roof.

I have visited Optus Stadium in Perth, and I thank Kath McCann very much for the assistance that she provided in helping to facilitate the meetings there and also the high-performance centres in Perth. Kath was absolutely great. I'm really pleased for you that this is continuing. Certainly, my opposition has never been about people.

As I said, I visited Optus and note the roof only extends over the patrons and not the ground. I accept that Hobart has chilling winds off the mountains, but I've always been told that football is a winter game and you get used to it.

I believe the stadium is proposed to be in the wrong place at a site that's unsuitable, too small, exposed, costly to remediate, contaminated soil, sewage tanks, the Goods Shed, way too expensive, detrimental to the heritage values of Hobart, and the financial impost on the state of only 570,000 people already suffering with a massive budget deficit.

I take this vote very seriously as to me it's not just about football or concerts. I'm voting for the future of Tasmania and its people.

We've been asked, 'How will investors look at us if we don't proceed with this stadium?' I ask, 'How would it look to investors when we have a well-credentialed panel of experts spend over a year fully assessing this project with submissions and evidence taken to release their report?' To my mind, being asked to sign a blank cheque and ignoring expert advice doesn't pass the pub test. By following the advice of the expert panel, the government signals that it prioritises a sound economic strategy and is committed to making evidence-based decisions. This can build trust and reassure investors that their capital is being invested in an environment with strong governance.

To be clear, to me the order before us is not a yes or no on the Macquarie Point stadium; it's an order to bypass council planning and scrutiny. While some of us in the upper House have spent time on local council, we're not planners, hence the reason experts are engaged.

I am concerned by the expectation the community was given when there were never going to be any guarantees that conditions of the AFL could be met.

Having come from a real estate background, we were always told to underpromise and overdeliver. To provide all the bells and whistles, including the mascot, Rum'un, getting passionate football followers, adults and children alike, to be so excited about a team and giving hopes and dreams to our younger generation, especially when it was possible it might not go ahead without a new roofed stadium, I felt was cruel. The frenzied excitement that's been whipped up, particularly in our young, when the outcome was unknown, to me was unfair to them and the possibility of losing the team they'd been built up to expect, in my mind, was sad. The way with the differing opinions in our community - and I am told some people lost friendships over it - it's really quite distressing.

I am in the unenviable position of either doing what I believe is right for our people and our state in the long term, and that's voting with my head and the facts before us, or pleasing other people and voting with my heart. Ultimately, if things go wrong then blame will rest on us whichever way it goes. This is a case where I would love to be wrong.

I'm a football follower and I support Hawthorn when they're in Launceston. I also support Collingwood. Should the stadium get up, I sincerely hope that all goes well - and I believe the stadium will get up - and I do hope that all goes well and that everyone's expectations are fulfilled. Whatever happens, the sun will come up tomorrow and life goes on, and I hope that the nastiness ends and that members are not vilified for whichever way they voted.

In May 2025, when speaking of special enabling legislation, the Premier issued what amounted to an ultimatum to upper House MPs, saying a Tasmanian AFL team won't go ahead unless the legislation passes. Responsibility for the AFL team does not lie with members of parliament who were not involved in signing the deal with the AFL that put in place the onerous requirements.

I believed, and still believe that renegotiation was the sensible pathway forward. I accept that many people say that wouldn't have happened, but how do we know? We didn't try.

Seriously, forgetting parochialism, just imagine for a minute if UTAS York Park had been made the temporary home of AFL football and our new team. I accept a new stadium would be needed in the future. The state wouldn't be divided and Tasmania, and Launceston in particular, would be thriving; however, UTAS Stadium is tier 2 and, surprisingly now, after the upgrades, with less capacity -

**Mr Duigan** - No, sorry.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is less capacity. I can show you an email from your own people.

How often have we heard AFL players claim that UTAS York Park has one of the best playing surfaces in the league and this is parochial? Unfortunately, we are not the capital city. If we were, there'd be no issue. In fact, I have always thought we should be, as Launceston has historically functioned as Tasmania's commercial and industrial centre. Perhaps we should have put a roof on UTAS Stadium.

I fail to see how this new stadium will be for the everyday football supporter, particularly from the north-west or north. As we all know, AFL is all about commercial gain, corporate boxes and broadcast and television rights. Imagine the cost for the average family, let's say two parents and two children from the north-west. Admittedly, less than travelling to the mainland, but certainly a lot more than travelling to Launceston. Close to four hours from Burnie to Hobart, likely with a stop - too far to travel home on the one day, so overnight accommodation and meals. It is a considerable amount of money.

Did the AFL or club presidents ever want an extra team? The question in the community is, did the AFL impose over-the-top conditions thinking Tasmania could never agree? It would now seem very difficult for the AFL to withdraw the licence if the order failed and that's where the government should have shown real leadership. I understand it's important for this order to play out before the AFL and club presidents could possibly come back to the table. I felt sure that the Devils would continue, as to do otherwise would cause great anger and resentment towards the AFL.

Tasmania is a part of Australia, although how often are we left off the map? If the AFL was truly a national game, then we should be welcomed with open arms. I would dearly love Tasmania to have a team in the AFL. We deserve it, we know it, and the AFL knows it. It's interesting to hear people say, 'If we do not get this licence it could go to the Northern Territory'. Realistically, there need to be 20 teams in the AFL because no-one would want a bye. Comments in *The NT News*, 12 July 2025, stated that the big question pressing for an answer is whether Northern Australia should construct its own AFL/NRL standard multipurpose stadium with an eye on a future 20th Australian Football League club licence. AFL Northern Territory's strategic business case for a stadium sensibly raises zero expectations. While making a strong case for its construction, it cautions that, and I quote:

... it will be at the discretion of the AFL and the AFL Club Presidents as to whether the [Northern Territory] is awarded the 20th Club licence ... to deliver the AFL with a truly national competition.

...

The CLP Government supported the stadium, but not if taxpayers had to foot the bill, said Business Minister Robyn Cahill.

'The previous Labor Government left Territorians with an enormous debt,' she said.

'If the federal government wants to put \$600 million on the table to build it, we're all ears'.

It would be easy to just say yes and forget, let it happen, but just because we can build it doesn't mean we should. That's not why we are elected though. We are elected to make the hard decisions, and whichever way it goes, a lot of people are going to be very unhappy. I have to live with the decision I make. I know I will cop a lot of criticism whichever way I go, but I have to be able to explain to people why I made it and how I came to that decision.

Like others, I have received thousands of emails. I have tried to acknowledge them all, and I may have accidentally missed some but have acknowledged most. While there are few

form emails, the vast majority, as was mentioned by the member for Murchison, were individual, something I've never seen before. I have also received a number posted to my office, with many handwritten.

Many emails in favour mentioned the high turnout at the 'yes' rally. I wasn't surprised by the number of passionate football followers who attended the rally on Sunday last. Tasmanians love their football, and I have no doubt the vast majority there were there hoping for a team that they had virtually been promised, despite the fact it had not passed through parliament.

I have also had meetings with a variety of people, some in favour and some against. The pleasing thing for me was that, even if we disagreed, we found some common ground. I was told my decision would be respected and you cannot ask for more than that.

It was disappointing to hear the Prime Minister last week requesting Legislative Council members support the stadium. It would have been better for the Prime Minister to have asked the AFL to grant Tasmania a team without the requirement of an immediate stadium.

As mentioned, I visited Optus Stadium in Perth this year. It has room, the concourses are expansive, it's built on a golf course. It's beautiful, with a lot of green space. There are limited parking spaces, as most people go to a game via public transport, which I've been advised is free on game days. One thing that remains with me from that visit was the comment that if you can't do it properly, you're better off not to do it at all. Can we do it properly at Macquarie Point? I don't believe we can, as there are too many issues that cannot be addressed.

I appreciated all the briefings, for and against. There's always something to learn at briefings. I particularly appreciated the hearings with the Tasmanian Planning Commission panel and thank the member for Nelson for facilitating this. The Tasmanian Planning Commission has provided a comprehensive report regarding the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance. Having combed through this report, I believe the panel fairly and accurately deals with an extremely large amount of evidence, expresses very reasonable concerns and highlights issues that are relevant to not just the people interested in the stadium, but to all Tasmanians.

I thank the panel for their expertise, their comprehensive consideration of the evidence provided to them, and for their time to come and answer questions from members of the Legislative Council last week.

At times, it's been difficult for the panel to answer questions that fall within their purview, where they might have been asked to reflect on matters which are political in nature, or which might be attempting to reveal some kind of bias or personal preference. I want to say that, at all times, I found every member of the panel to conduct themselves with professionalism, fairness reasonableness, common sense, and with the intention of handing the report based on evidence and merit. At all times, they've acted with independence and objectivity, which is exactly what they were tasked with and mandated to do.

The report is reasonably long, so I will go through parts of it, indicate quotations when necessary, and do my best to treat the content with the same level of clinical analysis that the TPC panel has.

The TPC report indicates a construction cost for the stadium as \$5900 per household not dependent on Commonwealth support, over 30 years. To pay for the stadium, it's been calculated that taxes would need to be raised by approximately \$50 million per annum. If not paid for by taxes, it would need to be paid for by debt, the amount of which is estimated to be approximately \$1 billion.

The TPC's recommendation report states:

At the end of 10 years, because of the compounding interest on deficit financing, the debt attributable to the stadium would be approximately \$1.8 billion, assuming a borrowing rate of 5 per cent, [noting that has increased] and taking into account the lifecycle costs, team subsidies, and event attraction costs, as well as the net financial operating position of the stadium.

Moreover, the TPC contends that, and I quote:

... There will be ever-increasing debt associated with the stadium because of the compound interest effect, unless taxes are increased, or spending on public service reduced, or other planned state capital projects abandoned, to pay for it ...

The TPC in its integrated assessment report considers, amongst other things, the net costs and benefits associated with the project, strategic planning and site plans, urban form, activation of public realm, historic cultural heritage and community values, Aboriginal heritage, land use compatibility, transport and movement, environmental effects, and construction program and sequencing.

The TPC received 840 representations during the exhibition period. This amount of evidence shows just how invested the community is in this project. I acknowledge these representations fall generally into those who are supportive of construction of the stadium and those who are not.

I further acknowledge that having a preference one way or the other is neither right nor wrong. Preferences can't be wrong, and every person who has made a representation, taken the time to contact me and other members in this place, and engaged with public consultation, including the TPC's assessment, has the best interests of the wider Tasmanian community at heart.

It's also important to emphasise the delivery of a stadium at Macquarie Point isn't a central requirement for the AFL to grant Tasmania an AFL and AFLW team of its own. This required the TPC to undertake a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) in reviewing the evidence and in order to reach conclusions that possess the weight of the evidence it was provided with. The report states that:

The Panel does not consider that the proposed conditions address the full Project scope and the impact of the Project, and considers that they do not mitigate significant negative effects, or give effect to all relevant planning considerations.

As I mentioned before, quantifying the evidence it was provided with, the TPC considered both tangibles like finance, investment and costs and benefits to the Tasmanian economy, as well as intangibles like social and cultural costs and benefits which are much harder to ascribe some kind of number to. In the words of the report:

The CBA aims to monetise economic, social, cultural, and community benefits and costs, and weigh the resulting net benefits against the costs of achieving them.

In order to make a recommendation, the benefit-cost ratio must be 1 or greater. The assessment made by the TPC on this project was 0.45, a significant failure. Even the proponent's cost-benefit analysis, prepared by KPMG and released in September 2024, shows a base case benefit-cost ratio of 0.69. The recommendation report notes that:

Since this study was undertaken, the stadium construction cost estimate has increased significantly.

And I dare say even more significantly since then.

The proponent submitted that the economic benefits to the state should be assessed on the size of the Tasmanian economy if the stadium is built versus the size of the Tasmanian economy if the stadium is not built. To this end, it named three effects to create economic benefit:

- (1) visitors spending money here that wouldn't have otherwise come without the stadium;
- (2) retaining Tasmanians spending money here to attend stadium events;
- (3) the increased economic activity occurring as a result of the Tasmanian football teams.

KPMG, in its report for the proponent, estimated a combined producer and labour surplus of 34.6 cents per dollar; the panel assessed it at 26 cents. While accepting the proponent's argument that the greatest beneficiary of the economic activity generated by the stadium would be independently owned, smaller local businesses in tourism, the panel had a lower estimate for new interstate visitors, especially for AFL games. This was based on a comprehensive study of the numbers of attendees to Tasmanian AFL matches contained in the integrated assessment report (IAR) cost-benefit analysis. The IAR, in considering this report, questioned the benefit values of these matters and noted the potential need for sustained investment to achieve some of these outcomes.

By way of example, the Tasmanian brand value, which was said to be enhanced by the proponent due to the stadium and team, was argued to be a drawback by others, through things like the impacted view of historic built heritage, noise impacts, detrimental effects on the Cenotaph, Federation Concert Hall and TMAG, as well as the negative impacts that the stadium project could have on historic built heritage in the area.

The capital scope of the overall project was obviously a major consideration of the report. This scope includes consideration of a stadium containing 23,000 seats, a bus plaza with the

purchase of extra buses, site works including energy, sewerage and general engineering, a northern access road, a car park of at least 300 spaces, relocation of the Goods Shed and minor street works.

The IAR states that the proponent's cost estimate doesn't account for unit-cost escalation or contingencies from the September 2024 estimate, but says it now includes commercial items that were previously thought to be funded by private investment including kitchen, food and beverage facilities, CCTV, floor areas and layouts, and similar considerations. This results in an estimate from the proponent of \$945 million as at September 2025.

Investment in the Tasmanian economy by the AFL and the Commonwealth Government was also considered. The AFL and Tasmanian government signed an agreement in May 2023 that included terms such as Tasmania providing \$12 million per year for 12 years to directly support the AFL and AFLW teams, AFL contributions to a value of \$124 million and a subsequent media release from the AFL stating total funding to Tasmania would be \$360 million. This includes \$15 million towards the project, \$10 million for the club's training and administration facility, \$93 million in game development, \$33 million to develop young male and female talent, and \$209 million in distributions to the new club over the first 10 years.

The Commonwealth Government, for its part, is slated to provide \$240 million for the development of the Macquarie Point site. Importantly, this does not mean the funding is for a stadium, but for the site itself. To this end, if the stadium project does not go ahead, these Commonwealth funds will be available for an alternative development. Accounting for contingencies and escalation of costs, the IAR arrived at a sum of \$1.134 billion. The report states:

There is substantial evidence that final costs are likely to be significantly greater than concept/design stage costs - as has particularly been the case in recent years for major public construction projects both in Australia and overseas. A sensitivity scenario is therefore included ... for an increase of 20% on the current cost estimate of \$945 million.

This is a very wise way to assess the potential economic costs of the project. Without wanting to wade into other politically sensitive topics, I note that the state has recently experienced this sort of cost blowout, with significantly greater funds required to complete some projects including things like ships and wharf construction. It seems like a matter of common sense to me to make provisions for cost increases and sensitivity scenarios, as the TPC has done here. Importantly, in the context of the issues that Tasmanians currently prioritise, the IAR contemplates the cost-of-living impacts the construction of the stadium will have on Tasmanian taxpayers. They state:

... to repay a loan to cover the construction cost when completed over the project's economic life, at a real interest rate of 3%, will cost approximately \$50 million per annum in real terms. That is, the level of state taxes would need to increase by about \$50 million per annum to pay for the Project, unless expenditure savings in other areas or from other State projects to the equivalent of the Project cost, are realised.

Given the recent announcement regarding Tasmania's credit rating, the need for a contingency plan for loan costs for the project has already become apparent.

The proponent also argued that the construction of the stadium represents an investment in the social infrastructure and should therefore be publicly funded. The IAR disagreed on the basis that a stadium is unlike hospitals or schools, which, in the discipline of economics, has a specific meaning. That is to say, in economics a public good is defined as a resource or service that is non-excludable and non-rivalrous, meaning everyone can use it and one person's use does not diminish its availability for others. This includes things like national defence, public parks, street lights, clean air and the like. These sorts of things necessarily must be funded through taxes and represent needs, not wants.

The IAR contends that to justify spending public money on the stadium, an achievable net social benefit must be apparent, which is not evident here. In fact, the project represents a net social cost. The IAR arrives at this conclusion by stating that economic and social benefits are minimal compared to the size of the public investment required. This is based on the notion that the loan taken out at construction completion, including interest, is estimated to be approximately \$1.02 billion.

The IAR further notes that an increase in economic activity during the construction phase, which could be called a sugar hit, can be followed by a springback effect where subsequent economic activity slows or even declines. At best, it seems to me that the tangible economic benefits slated by the proponent for the stadium are unclear and lack reliable evidence.

The IAR considered the actual physical built structure of the proposed stadium. Starting with the Macquarie Point precinct plan, the panel considers that the project as proposed will not support the urban renewal of the site. The IAR states:

... the project focuses inwards on the site in isolation of the wider city, and does not readily enable permanent activation of spaces or meaningful connections with the surrounding area and waterfront as envisaged by the Precinct Plan.

It goes on to say:

... the panel considers there are significant barriers to these spaces becoming attractive, active spaces that would draw people to the site outside of 'event mode'.

The report considers that the size of the stadium means that most of the space on the site will be taken up by the actual structure. This, according to the panel, will limit capacity on the site to support ongoing economic activity and mixed uses.

Generally, it was considered that the form of the stadium - its size, bulk, design and context - will be a dominant object in the landscape. The IAR describes it as an overbearing presence which will visually compete with and diminish the prominence of Queens Domain. The proponent argues that the stadium will substantially alter views to and from the Cenotaph and Domain headland, that it will be mitigated by the shape and materiality of the stadium's roof, and is ultimately an impact that is reasonable when considering the benefit that the project will create.

The IAR further notes multiple community concerns that were expressed with regard to the stadium's effect on the Hobart landscape. The panel considered that the height, singularity

and size of the stadium roof will intrude on the visual identity of the place in the city, and that the overall effect of this is negative.

It's important to note the effect on the Cenotaph as a major and important part of Hobart's history, landscape and link between our community, its past, and the expression of collective grief and the nature of sacrifice. This importance is well documented, and the IAR lists the Cenotaph's values as entailing: reverential ambiances and providing an opportunity for quiet reflection; visual privacy of a monument which represents and signals high value placed by the community on wartime service and sacrifice; the aesthetic qualities of the place; collective community sense of grief; associations between the place and its original designs; and the intent which is ascribed to the monument.

The panel considered the views of the proponent, who said they would consider avoiding scheduling major events which coincide with events at the Cenotaph. Neil Shephard, who gave evidence for the proponent, also stated that any negative perceptions about the visual prominence of the building must be balanced against the desired role and functionality of the proposal in the chosen location. In weighing the considerations, the panel came to the conclusion that the impacts on views will negatively affect the cultural significance of the place, as well as the status of the monument as a prominent visual indicator that serves both as a physical landmark and a visual reminder of its commemorative importance and purpose.

We need to adjudicate this on the merits of the proposal, not whether Tasmania should have an AFL team or not. The TPC report was an exhaustive and authoritative assessment of the stadium.

During other briefings, we heard about the cultural and social future, that the stadium was not optional but essential, that it was the difference whether critical infrastructure succeeds or struggles, that it had a reach far beyond sport, and was not an indulgence but allows Tasmania to join the AFL. How easy would it be to vote on a motion?

In further briefings, the unions told us there is a lack of work for apprentices and how good it would be to be able to start and finish on the one project, and for construction workers. My understanding is that with projects of this size and scale, tier 1 mainland contractors would be awarded the contract. It's vitally important that Tasmanian workers also get the opportunity to go onto this project, as work is sporadic in the construction industry.

We were told by others that the built heritage - the Hobart waterfront, the Hunter Street precinct - is the best example of built heritage in Australia, and that this project on this site will significantly alter the heritage feel and iconic view. We were told it would be changed forever. The TPC confirmed the impact on heritage could not be mitigated.

These feelings were echoed by the RSL - the impact on the international commemorative landscape chosen because the headland overlooked the whole of Hobart. The Cenotaph will be 100 years old on 13 December 2025, and is a reminder of the cost of war - not just a physical place, but intangible heritage. We've also heard from the Vietnam Veterans Association Tasmania Branch of their concerns. Lest we forget.

We need to consider the iconic views from Hunter Street, the Royal Engineers Building, the entry to Hobart that will be dwarfed. The stadium will loom over the waterfront and the

heritage areas. The facilities are inert, with little to nothing happening when there are no games. Other stadiums are set in parkland, which makes them work. This stadium is not.

I also note the briefings from tourism, the Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA), Business Events Tasmania (BET) and the Small Business Council. It is a fierce competitive environment.

As a state, we can't stand still. We need to learn from the problems of the past and invest in the future. The government provided figures on events. While it's accepted there will be new events, many will simply relocate from other areas and premises. I note the annual events calendar put out by the government:

- live sport and entertainment: 34 events across 37 event days
- major conferences: 40 events with 450-plus delegates per event across 80 days
- minor non-event day bookings: 260 bookings
- corporate dinners
- private functions
- major tenants: Tasmania Devils and Cricket Tasmania
- assumed one-off events: annual NRL
- maybe every four years: Socceroos and Matildas
- concerts: one full stadium plus one arena
- community events: several per year

There are 37 days of sport, assuming that the heads of agreements signed by Cricket Tasmania translate to a contract. However, those events are already played here at Bellerive, so they won't be new; they will simply be at a new venue. It also refers to the Devils as tenants and I'm assuming they won't be paying rent as one might expect of a tenant. At best, sport will account for three days per month.

It's also concerning that perhaps conferences of up to 500 people who can comfortably be accommodated now in the north and the south of the state may be relocated to the new stadium. Who wouldn't want their conference in the new 'you-beaut' stadium? This will undoubtedly have an impact on existing premises and these regions. While it's wonderful for the south to boom, it's also essential that other parts of the state are not forgotten.

It's unlikely that many people will come over for a football game and drive to the north or north-west. Having experienced Hawthorn in Launceston for many years, and my husband having a hotel that benefited from these people, I know that the vast majority who came over, came over for a weekend or just a day or two and then flew home. They did not tour the rest of the state.

I've also always been concerned about publicly funded entities using public assets to operate in opposition to privately operated businesses. Many of these conferences, I'm assuming, will go to the publicly funded stadium away from private businesses.

Public debt is spiralling and borrowing costs will be well over \$600 million per annum by 2028-29. Is this the time to be making major investments with public money? We've had a downgrading of our credit rating by both Moody's and S&P, which we know will affect our borrowings. There has been no comprehensive assessment of viable options or alternative sites.

The roof is of major concern. You only have to look at the glass-roofed UTAS Forestry Building in Hobart, which looks amazing, but the amount of structure holding up this much smaller roof is quite significant.

Talking about our youth leaving the state, I have four sons. Three left Tasmania for a life in Western Australia. One son has returned, and two sons have Western Australian partners, and their children have been born there. They didn't leave because there wasn't a multipurpose stadium for AFL games or concerts. They left because of the money they could make, and they loved the lifestyle on the beaches. I believe in the 10 or 15 years they've been there, they've been to one football game, at most, at Optus Stadium even though they both enjoy football. When they have gone to concerts, they told me they had flown to Sydney or even come back to Tasmania for Festivale.

While I accept the responsibility to vote on behalf of my constituents and the state as a whole, I am disappointed the opportunity for the people to have a say at this year's state election by way of a referendum was not taken. One extra sheet of paper would have made it very clear once and for all, whichever way it went, how people felt.

As mentioned, I do have serious concerns with regard to the proposed stadium and the amount of debt the state will have to service for decades to come. Tasmania has been struggling with fiscal management for some time, and I'm greatly concerned about the elevated debt levels that will be felt if the stadium goes ahead.

I have a couple of letters worth mentioning. It's really nice to have all the letters we received and, like others, I read all the letters. I took the time and, as I said, I made the effort to respond to them and called them by name. I thought it was really important because I didn't know if they were in my electorate or not because many of them just had a name. It did take a while, actually doing it while I was sitting in the Chamber mainly and responding -

**Ms Forrest** - Not concentrating on the debate?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It depended on what the debate was. I am not going to use any names, some are for and some are against. One letter from a lady from New Town:

On the above issue, I would like to ask a personal question. If you were in a power of debt, would you ignore the advice of your financial advisor and invest an immense sum of family money in a project with no guaranteed return? This is what the government and opposition are asking us, many of whom have little interest in AFL football, preferring soccer, rugby, basketball et cetera.

The Planning Commission said no, Saul Eslake said no, the universally popular Andrew Wilkie says no, even Jeff Kennett says no. Principally because of Tasmania's already dire financial status, I am asking you to vote no.

Then, there was someone who I knew who had done some work for me and identified himself:

My thoughts on the stadium, for what it's worth, is a definite yes for site position and I am completely comfortable with the debt. I see the stadium purely as a benefit for our youth, work created initially with construction, investment in private business around the precinct, growth in property values and all the work around the clubs, physio, sports science, the list is endless. Anyway, all the best, Rosemary.

Another one:

I'm a 68-year-old Tasmanian. I am urging you to vote yes for the stadium. I took my 10-year-old grandson to the yes rally and I was blown away by the excitement in his eyes. It's not about me or you; it's for the future. I know it's a lot of money for this investment, but at least there's a return on that investment through sporting uses, concerts, conferences, et cetera. This is not the case in any other massive infrastructure project, for example the Bridgewater Bridge. Finally, isn't it time we had Tasmania on the national stage and be known for a progressive state as opposed to how we're always seen as a state going backwards? Please vote yes. Let's believe in ourselves and let's go forward.

Another one:

I don't want to add any pressure in the lead up to the upper House vote on the stadium, but I did want to share a quick personal thought and my son's as locals here in Hobart. For many of the reasons you are probably already considering, I am personally not in favour of the stadium and think we need to enter renegotiations with the AFL and other club CEOs. A few days before the no stadium rally, I asked my 14-year-old son what he thought. I didn't influence his answer at all, he said 'Yeah, it'd be okay but I don't think it should be built right there in the city'.

I felt that it was important to share his perspective, especially as a young person who loves his sport and will be living with the outcome. Anyway, I just wanted to pass on our views as you head into the vote. Thanks for taking the time.

And the last one:

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed Mac Point Stadium order and to urge you to do the same. The proposal is simply not sustainable and raises significant concerns regarding the stadium's impact on the Tasmanian community including future generations, debt-servicing, environmental risks, financial transparency and the lack of consultation and disregard of expert qualified opinion. The proposal does not sufficiently demonstrate that the public benefits outweigh the anticipated costs.

As mentioned, I have serious concerns with regard to the proposed stadium and the amount of debt the state will have to service for decades to come. As I said, Tasmania has been struggling with fiscal management for some time, and I am greatly concerned about the elevated debt levels that will be felt if the stadium goes ahead.

In closing, unfortunately something that should have been celebrated has been a cause of great conflict in our community, but in my opinion this needs to be a rational decision from me, not an emotional decision. I will accept the decision of this parliament, I always accept the umpire's decision, and I certainly can count the numbers. However, it is my hope that the optimistic forecasts will be realistic and achievable. I sincerely hope that it does perform as people who have supported it have wished. As I said, I will support the umpire's decision and I note the order.

[8.50 p.m.]

**Mr GAFFNEY** (Mersey) - Madam Deputy President, before I begin my speech, I take this opportunity to congratulate those individuals who have been involved with the Tasmanian AFL and AFLW teams. At all times, the people involved with the Tasmania Devils teams have acted with enthusiasm, have created a supportive environment for the team and the Tasmanian community. I thank them for that.

I do not often in this Chamber give a lengthy speech, usually 15 to 20 minutes. The forest wars speech was quite long in 2011, same-sex marriage in 2014, and in more recent times my voluntary assisted dying bill second reading speech in 2020 was quite long, but this is going to be a lengthy contribution.

I believe I need to put on the record the case I'm making on behalf of the Tasmanians who are supportive of an AFL team but not at any cost, and for those Tasmanians who do not want to damage forever the beautiful vista, the site of significance of our Aboriginal heritage, site of remembrance, and the historic feel of the whole Hobart area. This site is going to change once this order gets passed, and it will be changed forever, irrevocably.

To the 'Yes Team, Yes Stadium' supporters, you may wish to tune out for my contribution and return to the screen in about 90 minutes. To the 'Yes Team, No Stadium' Tasmanian majority, you may wish to listen, but be able to go away for a coffee or something at some time, and to the 'No Team, No Stadium' people, you're probably not listening anyway and have probably been forgotten throughout the debate, especially those who have no wish to play and watch football. Indeed, to the young non-sporting child or young person and adult, we have hopes that you will also receive the opportunities you deserve to develop your own aspirational goals and that your interests -

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - Order, there is no quorum. Ring the bells.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Technically, if there weren't seven people in here, do I have to start again or is the clock captured on this?

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - It is best if you keep going.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I thought as much.

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - I believe it is best for you.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - While I was adding final changes to my speech, I received a media release which had indicated the government now had the numbers for the order. Whilst I was disappointed, I was not surprised.

Indeed, months ago when I started receiving emails and/or correspondence from Yes Stadium supporters - and I always try to respond in a timely manner - in my response I actually included the quite prophetic comment saying, 'However, I do feel at this time the government will have the numbers in the upper House,' and that's been my speech for the last three months.

I was confident, with three Liberals plus the Leader and two Labor, giving a total of six members who would vote for the stadium passing, only two more members were required for this order to pass. In recent times, observing the commentary within the Chamber and throughout the media and within the community, it came as no surprise that the majority of eight was achieved.

However, it is important for me to read into *Hansard* my thoughts about the stadium as I am representing Tasmanians who are quite bewildered about what has occurred, and that this stadium project is our pathway to Tasmania's economic recovery.

I sometimes also feel when I'm speaking, I try to speak quickly to get off the stage, but I'm not going to on this one because this is really important. Whilst my speech will not change members views or indeed seek to change the views of those listening, I will present my thoughts to have them recorded as part of this debate.

Madam Deputy President, a few months ago now I had already prepared a speech foreshadowing this very topic. However, as we know, the government put forward several novel proposals for the future of Tasmania, including a privatisation agenda as an attempt to bail out our exploding debt to sell off the family silver. Tasmania's money surplus was sometimes referenced in previous years as the 'hay in the barn' or the 'rivers of gold'. I think the river has dried up and there's no barn, let alone any hay to put in it.

An opposition-led challenge sent Tasmanians back to the polls only just over a year after the last state election, costing the state even more. After this, in a post-election road to Damascus, some of these proposals have been revised and some dropped entirely for simply being poor ideas.

Nonetheless, there is one idea that the drowning Liberal and Labor parties have clung onto like their lives depended on it, and that was the dead weight of the Macquarie Point stadium, despite the clear and well-reasoned opposition, despite the accepted need for fiscal responsibility, and despite broad acceptance that the government clearly has no idea of the actual financial impost that the project will have on Tasmania.

Of the two times I've spoken to this matter, one was in support of the notice of motion from the member for Nelson. The first time that I spoke, I put to you that many Tasmanians want an AFL team, but not if it comes at the cost of multigenerational debt and seemingly ceding the control of government finances to the AFL.

Consequently, I made the point, as many have, that support for a Tasmanian AFL team cannot and should not equate to support for a stadium at Macquarie Point, especially that the government has recently announced it will now come at a cost of over \$1 billion. In one briefing, we heard it went from \$1.1 billion to \$1.3 billion to \$1.5 billion, finishing at \$2.4 billion by the time this is built. That is if we actually include interest on the debt. The member for Murchison has previously covered the debt situation and the financial impost and consequences that will continue to grow with the stadium build.

It was my view that the government has been naive in its approach to the AFL. The Liberal government is allowing this to happen, committing us to an unneeded stadium in a sensitive and historically important location, and without any mandate whatsoever. All the AFL has done is to hold the Premier to the contract he signed - complete with a pipe dream of an unfunded stadium.

As such, I fully supported the member for Nelson, Meg Webb's previous motion seeking to reopen negotiations with the AFL to ensure that Tasmania gets a fair deal. To me, this was preferable to the current strategy: using undemocratic, unrepresentative government processes to force legislation through this parliament.

We do have an opposition, but one that consistently toes the line of the government it should be opposing; an opposition that has consistently failed to side with most Tasmanians on this issue. We look at the lion rampant in our state flag, but where is the courage in our opposition to take on the government in this farce? The abject failure of Labor in the last election, which it forced, alongside the doubling of the votes of stadium-opposing independents, tells its own story.

However, there yet may be 'trouble in the mill' in the ALP, as whilst the Hobart-based parliamentary Labor Party may well be in furious public agreement about supporting the stadium, its grassroots branches may beg to differ. Only last week, the secretary of the Devonport branch was at pains to share with us all a recent branch resolution urging the Tasmanian PLP not to support the construction of the Macquarie Point stadium by the state government. In her covering email, the secretary added:

... There is a great deal of opposition to this development along the North-West Coast, and as a branch we felt it was important that you as a Legislative Councillor, should be aware of this before the matter comes up for debate in your chamber.

The resolution cited two points from a range of compelling reasons to say no:

- the final report of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, a panel of experts, identified amongst a range of issues, both continuing and significant cost increases and the inappropriate location.
- increasing state debt, now at \$13 billion with over \$600 [million] a year in interest and rapidly increasing, which does not yet include further cost increases for construction of the stadium and associated works.

The fact that this resolution was moved by former senator Nick Sherry and an experienced financial adviser who was also an administrator of Tasmanian Labor suggests that its Hobart-based leadership is out of touch with the views of its grassroots membership.

Indeed, many Merseysiders have reminded me that the Bacon, Lennon and Crean leadership team for Labor made it quite clear regarding the state plan that cricket was going to be based in Hobart and as is now basketball, and that football was to be focused in Launceston. The Devonport Labor branch still remembers that vision and future cohesive plan for the state, and there was pain when that actually was discussed and put forward by the party at that time. We can remember that, but Bacon or that group saw it was important to make sure the whole of Tasmania had access to top-class sporting and infrastructure.

I was always led to believe that party branches were strongly associated with their elected members in their region. One could argue the Labor Party leader would not allow a conscience vote for fear that some party members might reflect the feeling from within their own local community. How dare they represent their community?

It is well known there are members of the government who voiced their disapproval, especially those in the north, about this project. When the Premier suggested the POSS process would allow all 50 members the right and responsibility to vote, that wasn't accurate at all, as 37 or 38 of those members of the parliament are party members. I don't think it passes the pub test to imply that all 50 parliamentarians were able to vote on their conscience. They weren't. They were not allowed.

The issues I originally found with the stadium proposal area are as salient as ever. Many Tasmanians have told me they do not want the stadium, while the Premier continues to pretend that support for a team must equal support for the debt millstone that comes with a new stadium, only because he signed off on that contract. I also wanted to make it known there are definite supporters of the stadium in my electorate.

However, the government has doubled down on its questionable practices by introducing this bill to force the stadium proposal past all due process. Might does not equal right, and it is simply wrong-headed to expect members of parliament to act as planning experts even though we are not. The abuse of power is unfathomable, with the government pressuring the parliament to capitulate to its undemocratic lawmaking to pass this shoddy idea.

It is deeply concerning for me that these issues continue to go unaddressed and unacknowledged as the government tramples all over proper governance and the opposition looks the other way.

As Mr Patrick McGrath writes in the *Mercury*:

The AFL bankrolls struggling expansion teams in disengaged markets, but when Tasmania - a football heartland that delivers consistent crowds and pipeline of elite talent - asks for a licence, we're told to cough up a billion-dollar stadium first.

The stadium deal prioritises Australian Rules football when it does not need to. It is to the detriment of Tasmanians. The numbers do not work, there is no valid business case, and the use of what is a unique parcel of land is an appalling disaster. Many Tasmanians in my

electorate, I believe, are opposed to the deal, noting that Tasmania has a population of approximately 570,000 people, and we should not forget some of whom could not give two hoots about Australian Rules football.

I suggest that, for many Tasmanians, the effect has been to see the AFL as controlling the process, with the government acquiescing, and the 'Yes AFL, Yes Stadium' lobby group providing excitement, voice - and good on them - and business and industry advice and support. Yet not many private investors have stepped up to the plate that I am aware of.

I must make clear here, too, after that group met with us to talk about how it would run when it was passed, if it got through, I am very comfortable with that process, but it should not even get to there.

Many of us are wondering how the very idea of a new AFL stadium became such a deal breaker. I think a recent email sent to all of us points to Olson's theory of *The Logic of Collective Action*. The central tenet is that there is an inverse relationship between group size and the effectiveness of lobbying. To quote directly from the email:

It explains why policies that benefit very small minority groups such as agricultural subsidies and import tariffs are so prevalent in society. Numerous peer reviewed papers in the economic literature have applied *The Logic of Collective Action* theorem to explain why pro-stadium supporters are disproportionately vocal, well-funded, and are so effective in their use of 'threats' (i.e. the threat of 'No stadium, no team' is straight out of the stadium boosters playbook, a promise that tediously accompanies every stadium debate across the world).

Essentially, with small interest groups (i.e. concentrated benefits), such as the pro-stadium crowd, the per-capita benefit is incredibly high (e.g. they stand to gain in excess of \$2 billion in taxpayers' money, prime waterfront land and other people's kids forgoing other sports/hobbies in order to play their passion, AFL), providing strong incentive for each member to actively lobby, contribute their resources and time and 'turn up'.

It perhaps explains why the pro-stadium crowd are 'all in', as whilst they have the whole state behind them in getting a team, they will never get a better chance to bulldoze their stadium into the Hobart CBD - regardless of the cost and the long-term impact on Tasmania as a whole. They simply don't care how it will be paid for or the damage it will do to our long-term finances. It goes beyond wanting a team at any cost, into demanding a stadium at any cost.

However, Tasmanians are very community-minded, and it was very pleasing and didn't surprise me at all to see 200,000 people across Australia supporting our own AFL team. I signed up with my \$10 for the team, as did many north-west coasters. I did not support a newly built stadium at Macquarie Point, nor do many people who speak to me in my electorate.

The second time I spoke to this matter more recently, I made the point that the stadium will be a watershed moment for Tasmania, one of the most consequential economic and political projects to come before parliament in recent history. I called on the major parties to allow the members to hold a conscience vote on the stadium. Not one of those leaders took up that.

In short, members in both Houses have a direct and ultimate responsibility to their respective electorates. However, in this matter, the overwhelming majority of members in both Houses will be forced to vote with the will of their party, often against their electorate. Meanwhile, each published public opinion poll has shown the vast majority oppose the proposal, especially in rural and regional electorates. I stated in my prior speech that despite the Premier brokering the stadium deal with the Labor Party's support, it does not mean all Liberal and Labor members think that the deal will be in the best interests of their constituents, or indeed, Tasmanians as a whole. Hence the motion from the Devonport ALP branch about the stadium. And it was a deal, a deal which was sprung on Tasmanians, and a deal that has unfortunately divided Tasmanians.

We, as members, are damned if we support the project and damned if we don't. Of course, the government is attempting to bypass proper process on the basis that this politically untenable situation will pressure parliament to fold to its whims.

It must be hard for many party members in this place and the lower House - no, it's not because I have heard it from members here - to have a vote in favour of the Macquarie Point stadium, especially when they know full well that a significant majority of voters in their electorates are not in favour of the stadium deal, especially those from the north of the state.

It's farcical to me that both parties happily accepted that Tasmania is in financial dire straits, toing and froing about how to remedy it, whilst fiddling as our financial situation is getting worse. Despite this, they expect their members to blindly vote in favour of the most controversial and impactful fiscal decision of recent history, irrespective of whether it will actually benefit their electorate.

It makes it hard to vote on this matter as an Independent member of the upper House. The government has bypassed proper process, relied on the capitulation of the primary opposition, and is undeniably operating in bad faith to get this build through.

The Legislative Council is the final bastion of 'proper process' as Independents hold the swing. Therefore, Independent members have been forced into the position where even when they support the project, they must still capitulate to pressure by the government to allow its bad-faith lawmaking. And, if they wish to reflect their constituents and not support the stadium, or cannot bring themselves to allow such bad governmental practice, as I suggest they should not, they will inevitably be subject to intimidation, distasteful and disrespectful dialogues, and impugned as myopic and out of touch and not forward-thinking.

No matter a member's position, they are subject to unfair and unprecedented expectations, pressure, and required to act in a planning capacity beyond which is expected in parliament. All this is simply because the government did not want to follow the proper process. I've been in this place for 16 years and, like for the members for McIntyre and Murchison, this is the toughest it's been in all those times.

This brings me to the core of my direct response to the enabling legislation. Simply put, it is our role to act on the considered needs and hopes of our constituents, and to vote in good conscience for what best reflects the will of our electorate. Following this, I feel compelled to vote against this development as a poor use of public money, a shoddy idea and an extraordinary governmental abuse of process.

I've received considerable correspondence on this matter from people and organisations across the state. I make a point of genuinely considering the opinion of and responding to each person who writes to me. I feel that it is our duty to respond to the needs of our electorate and constituents across Tasmania. I'm sure most members in this House feel the same.

Of those who wrote to me, a staggering majority have been opposed to the stadium. I have a folder for 'for' the stadium and for 'against' the stadium. I respond to each one, because if you only have a 0.8 staffer, they've got other things to do. I had a total of 2478 emails. Those 'for' were 547; those 'against' were 1931. In these emails, I've received a range of diverse, informative and genuine feedback by qualified and insightful Tasmanians, many of whom have professional knowledge and experience, are deeply concerned about the stadium, and have dedicated countless hours to making thoughtful and relevant submissions.

I can reinforce the statements made by other members here about the very few templated responses that I received. The ones I really liked were the ones that obviously came from some elderly men or ladies who had taken their time to painstakingly write their point of view. It sometimes annoys me when I hear people using ageist comments at some of the presentations, but I will get back to that a bit later.

Although most have a similar position in supporting an AFL team, the stadium infrastructure build is another matter entirely. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Premier accepted or even started to negotiate for this dubious, divisive and disgraceful deal.

From the host of correspondence, one thing is certain: I genuinely believe that for my electorate, and more broadly the entirety of Tasmania, the Macquarie Point stadium is an unwanted and unwelcome idea. I must question whether those so staunchly in support of the stadium proposal do truly listen to and consider their constituents. How can one in good faith ignore the breadth of opposition to the stadium from expert economists, architects, community leaders, mums and dads, and everyday Tasmanians, and even from mainland and international actors, and throw it all out in favour of imaginary economic outcomes and fictional benefits? It's snake oil. It both baffles and frustrates me.

Just look at the way this project has gone down. Failing proper process, the two major parties have used their combined numbers to force bypassing enabling legislation through the lower House, compelling their members to vote against the interests and needs of their constituents. Now, they expect the upper House to capitulate and do the same, solely based on public pressure and fantastical promises.

As a writer opined in a letter to me:

Dear Mr Gaffney, you will soon be asked (- bullied) to approve the expenditure of some \$1.5 billion for a stadium at Macquarie Point and its add-ons.

I will, though, not get bullied and 99 per cent of my interactions have been positive and respectful. There have been a couple of poorly worded comments and responses, mainly out of frustration, I believe, because 15,000 people showed up and they think that's the reason I should change my mind. It's not how it works, not in the role that we're in. Our role is not to say, there's a lot of people, so pass the legislation. Our role is to say, here's the legislation, is it good, or is this project good?

I also attended that rally and it was fantastic. I will come back to that later, but I also appreciate the 92 people who showed up at Devonport for a rally on the Saturday. They had a megaphone, they had no microphone, they had no wobble boards, they had no water boys advertising, but there were 92 people who showed up and they spoke. They all got up, had a chat on the megaphone about what they thought was wrong. It is disappointing when I hear disparaging remarks about some groups. It's not about age or sexes or race or elitism. I refuse to use that language.

I also contacted a magazine and let them know I didn't like the way they characterised some of the 15,000 people who were at the stadium rally. I believe some of the words they used were inappropriate. I don't like the words leaders use in this place calling others 'selfish'. I don't think there's any need for that. If we're going to get through this, we have to be better than that.

I should also take the time to mention from the outset that it is not just older Tasmanians against the stadium proposal. I've seen this stereotype pushed and it is simply wrong. The furphy that somehow only old people care about the economic welfare of our state, and its associated implication that they're not fit to make the decision, is an absurd and insulting position. I saw lots of young people and old people at the pro-stadium rally here last week on Sunday. I've attended various rallies, both for and against, and it could not be further from the truth. I've been observed and been approached by people from all places, all professions and all ages. People care about the future of their state, the future that their children will inherit and must pay for.

Throughout the process, I've continued to believe that the proponents of the stadium proposal are acting in good faith while supporting a bad idea. To my mind, the Premier, and his predecessor, should never have offered the deal he did. He should have intuitively recognised how dangerous it was when he met with the AFL. The AFL did not demand a stadium The Premier offered it and the AFL said yes.

Tasmania should already have an AFL team, and it must not be conditional on a new stadium at Macquarie Point. This is especially so when no other AFL franchise team has ever been subject to this enormous financial imposition, one which will no doubt weigh down our state for decades and generations. Public debt is spiralling out of control. Is this the time to be committing to well over a billion dollars, even before the inevitable blowout, into such a risky venture?

Frankly, the actions of the government and the primary opposition of the day have gradually pushed me to oppose the stadium. How can we, as a government apparently acting in good faith, underfund and cripple our justice, forensic and integrity entities, continue fiscal mismanagement and expose ourselves internationally to the suggestion that Tasmania is a corrupt and scandal-ridden place, as suggested by the Sussex University papers?

One can only question the gravy train for vested interests that this stadium project holds, and for what? Tim Hurburgh, former chair of a Melbourne architectural firm, wrote to me discussing the potential for a stadium without a roof. This much simpler design would remove a third of the cost. More pertinent to the point at hand, he notes that the government gets screwed at every turn with such unique and unprecedented builds.

A point emphasised in Shamus Mulcahy's briefing to us last week where he explored the risks involved in agreeing to a blank cheque for the developers as cost projections inevitably

spiral in the 'she'll be right' approach from the government. Once the contract is signed, it's all over. Once the ball starts to roll down the hill, we can't say, 'Oh no, you can't have any more money.' 'What do you mean you can't have any more money? You only have half a field.' 'Well, no, you can't have any more money because you've got to the top.' That's not going to work. We only have to look at the TT-Line experience for the new *Spirits* docked in East Devonport to get a hint of what is to come. If we're going to say you only have this much money, the boats wouldn't be here. The ships wouldn't be here. We had to give them more money to get them here.

The cost of variations and site surprises will risk bankrupting us in ways we never expected. If that isn't enough, the government of the day continues to sweep damning report after damning report under the rug while ignoring the rule of law, simply to impose what will, for many, be a surprise generational debt on Tasmanians and against their will.

Madam Deputy President, acting in good faith as an accountable member of the Legislative Council, I simply cannot and will not support this proposal. As a constituent wrote to me on the Tasmanian Planning Commission report:

This is the best clear and concrete evidence we have with respect to the proposal for the construction of a stadium at Macquarie Point. It involved public hearings, hundreds of submissions, (including from government and the AFL) and a detailed analysis.

[The fact] that the TPC report is dismissed by Liberal and Labor as 'subjective opinion' should cause you significant concern. This is especially so when such out of hand rejection of such a thorough and detailed process and report occurs so quickly after its release and is balanced against nothing more than belief (which I have addressed above). It demonstrates a closed mind by the Liberal minority government and the (even more minority) Labor opposition, and a fanatical bias in favour of the proposal from which nothing will dissuade its proponents. You can, of course ... bring a greater analytical focus to the objective evidence.

Such an approach to governance and decision making as shown by Liberal and Labor is not reflective of representational democracy nor good government. Each of you collectively constituting the house of review, I would, sure, adopt a far more balanced, nuanced and appropriate decision-making matrix. Indeed, I would suggest that the 2 questions to be addressed (is a stadium at Macquarie Point and is the order approving the stadium the right thing for Tasmania) would and must be approached from a null-hypothesis, it is neither good nor bad but to be considered by weighing the objective evidence.

This, of course, is not something that has or will occur in the lower House. Both Liberal and Labor offer strident, unequivocal support, notwithstanding the available and objective evidence and acknowledge the opposition of the majority of the electorate, against which the acknowledged majority opposition is all more cynical for some to then seek to refer to stadium support as a silent majority, as though simply saying it will make it true.

Of course, my honourable colleagues, you will be aware we have been asked to act in the place of the planning commission. The government did this after throwing out the report that had been created via proper process, which they also tried to silence. I note that the Tasmanian Planning Commission is the independent statutory body ultimately trusted with reviewing, advising on and determining land use and development matters across Tasmania - the planning backstop for complex applications. However, when the government does not agree with its recommendations, the commission and its learned members are unfairly maligned as uninformed or subjective.

When we met with the TPC last Thursday, I remember asking the question: if you were sitting as a planning authority and there is an issue in front of you, are you allowed to have a predetermined position until you hear the evidence? Clearly not. In this situation, we have 50 people acting as a planning authority and 38 of them not only have a predetermined position, they are told how they have to vote, so that process is not a fair and responsible one and doesn't pass the pub test.

The same happened to the multiple economic reports from well-credentialed experts consistently saying the same thing: that the stadium is not a good idea. Well-respected economists with national and international profiles are receiving blame, vilification and having their work discredited. The government has churned through each relevant planning and economic advisory body process, first labelling them as valuable and important, then throwing their advice in the bin when the considered reports and recommendations do not fit the groupthink of the Tasmanian Liberals. After this, they turn to us members of parliament, telling us to trust them and ignore the well-credentialed experts.

I am not a planning expert. Although, with my 20 years of local government experience and three years as president of the Local Government Association of Tasmania, I'm probably more familiar with planning processes than most. We are all members elected to represent the views of our electorate. It is no way proper process to slander and impugn the considered advice of statutory bodies and pretend that members of parliament can do their job instead.

An article by the *Tasmanian Times* puts it well:

The government was forced by two of its own MHAs to refer the stadium project to the Tasmanian Planning Commission for review as a Project of State Significance. After an interim report that was overwhelmingly negative, the government attempted to circumvent the process by tabling legislation that would have ended the TPC's investigations and enabled the stadium to immediately proceed. The TPC stated that they would continue their work and hold public hearings regardless. After initially saying they would not participate, the government suddenly agreed to do so, having realised that there was no way to prevent the TPC from concluding their work. This attempt to preempt due process constitutes a clear failure to govern responsibly and in the best interests of the Tasmanian people.

The work that the Tasmanian Planning Commission was to do was moved by both Houses of parliament, so the government could not tell them that they had to stop.

The government has attempted to obscure or hide outright the true costs of the stadium which generations of Tasmanian taxpayers will have to bear, and

to obscure or minimise the true impacts of the stadium on the cultural and heritage values of the Hobart waterfront and the Cenotaph.

The effort to close down the TPC review was intended to inhibit transparent exposition of the issues in the public square. It would have prevented people from accessing factual information about the project on which to base an opinion, leaving them dependent on marketing spin. These attempts to pull the wool over Tasmanians' eyes are further evidence of the failure to govern responsibly.

The government has chosen to disregard the expert advice of independent economic analysts and the Tasmanian Planning Commission who laid bare the true situation.

The latter [Tasmanian Planning Commission] spent one full year examining the project from every angle and concluded that 'the disbenefits ... would outweigh the benefits' of a stadium at Macquarie Point. In every case, the government tried to impugn the messengers, saying their conclusions were 'a matter of opinion', or suggesting that they were biased, or 'not really' experts. The government's refusal to listen to these warnings is yet another inexcusable failure, one which could result in a catastrophic collapse of Tasmania's finances in years to come.

Mr President, I will take a slight detour at this point to read into *Hansard* a letter my colleagues and I received from a Tasmanian, directly addressing the needs for a government that represents the people in this decision:

I trust that you will be representing the people of Tasmania when you consider voting on the new stadium proposal in parliament.

Not just the Tasmanians who love footy and could afford to travel to Hobart for a game, but for all Tasmanians.

Not just the financially well-off Tasmanians who would find ways around cuts to public services like health and housing, but all Tasmanians.

I am dismayed to think that any more cuts would be required of my colleagues in Health who are already over-stretched and stressed as the complexity of health problems increases.

By my calculations, the cost of the proposed stadium equates to between \$2000 and \$4000 per head of Tasmanian. This money could go a long way to improving the lives of all Tasmanians with ongoing benefits and a large return on investment. Let me give you just two examples.

Example 1: Housing: make sure every house is insulated.

Benefits: reduction in fuel poverty, increase in comfort, reduction in sickness and hospital admissions for asthma, pneumonia and other respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses. Win win win ...

Example 2: Return on investment; close to \$4 for every \$1 invested.

Health: expand investment in early childhood programs and initiatives like the First 1000 Days.

Benefits: improved education and literacy, increased ability to engage in the workforce, later time to first childbearing. Win win win. Ongoing.

Return on investment: between \$4 and \$9 for every \$1 invested.

I expect that you will be authentically representing the actual wants and needs of the people of Tasmania when you vote against the Macquarie Point stadium proposal.

I trust you have the courage to listen to the people and the experts and vote against this proposal.

The person who wrote this also supplied studies to back the two examples. Notwithstanding, the email puts up the bigger question we are facing in making this decision: will we, by permitting the stadium to be built, be acting in the best interests of the people of Tasmania? Are there not more pressing matters, more beneficial investment opportunities, and needs of Tasmanians that can be made over that of another stadium? To me, the clear and obvious response to these questions is that even notwithstanding the numerous and obvious better uses of money, permitting the stadium to be built is not acting in the best interests of Tasmanians.

The stadium will impose an overwhelming financial imposition where the interest compounding alone will destroy our finances, not to mention our credit ratings being reduced even before a sod is turned or a brick has been laid, before we've even gone into a penny of debt for this proposal.

Indeed, another Tasmanian, a mediator, wrote me a letter to similar effect. In an attempt to communicate with the Labor and Liberal representatives, he said he learned from the experience that:

1. Representative democracy in Tasmania is dead or dying. Notwithstanding that every poll suggests that a majority (indeed, a significant majority) of Tasmanians oppose the Stadium (for varied and myriad reasons) the proposal has progressed and absent your vote against the order, the stadium will be built at an unknown and ever-increasing cost. This is all the more concerning as Eric Abetz, in last week's parliamentary debate regarding motion 36, acknowledged this reality, with his comment 'we all know what the polls say'. Indeed, we do. They say that Tasmanians do not want this Stadium. But that is dismissed by not only Minister Abetz ('of course, there will be Naysayers' i.e. the majority of Tasmanian voters; 'People will warm to this', 'no, we won't and especially not when it has visually destroyed the most beautiful harbour in Australia) but Mr Willie, 'Nobody ever regrets building a stadium', whereas I strongly suspect we will, as Tasmanians, strongly regret doing so if you vote for the order.

Labor and Liberal do not represent their constituents. They do not engage with them. They do not listen to them. They do not inform them nor attempt to discuss or articulate issues or address them. That emailing a local Member and requesting a meeting or seeking a response to stated concerns results in silence is a sad reflection on the state of representation and governance in Tasmania.

It is a sad day when Tasmanians cannot trust their government to put their needs first. It is a sad day when the two major parties neither represent the will of the people nor bother to interact with their constituents. The writer then went on to state:

I sincerely hope that each of you, as Members of the Legislative Council, the house of review, will be more responsive and more interested in good governance and the stated role of the Tasmanian Parliament - the peace, order and good government of Tasmania. To that end, I would plead with you to each reflect, with respect to the Stadium issue, on the very nature of good government and, especially, to be asking yourselves the relevant and pertinent questions, indeed the right questions, of:

- (1) Is building a stadium at Macquarie Point the right thing for Tasmania?
- (2) Is voting for the Order for construction of the stadium, as drafted, the right thing for Tasmania?

To date, so much of the narrative has been framed as, 'If we do not build a stadium at Macquarie Point, there will be no team'. With the greatest of respect, that is not a relevant question or consideration. The above 2 questions are those which are relevant and are those which every piece of objective evidence, from Gruen and the Tasmanian Planning Commission onwards, have answered with a resounding NO. I would urge you similarly to vote no and reject the order and reject the stadium at (and thus protect and preserve) Macquarie Point and for the reasons that I will articulate herein.

The Legislative Council is the House of review, or as a submission I received in staunch opposition to the stadium labelled it, 'the House of sober second thought.' I put to you that we as reviewers face a quite simple position: to support and agree to endorse such a flawed idea as the stadium would be a failure to act responsibly as a member of the Legislative Council. We've had a bad idea thrust onto us as a last resort and it is being unfairly demanded by the government that we cave to pressure rather than do our job. As a constituent heavily opposed to the stadium said in an email to me:

It is the responsibility of the members of the Legislative Council to make an informed decision about the proposed stadium based on the business case and professional economic planning and transport planning analysis and advice. If the Legislative Council falls for the government's argument that the stadium will be good for the Tasmanian economy without first considering expert advice based on economic analysis, a detailed business case, a transport, road and traffic impact report, and an impact on city planning analysis, it will betray the very reason for the Council's existence.

In my response to the constituent who had written this, I stated:

I am not able to support the current stadium proposal. I believe that would be irresponsible of me as a member of the Legislative Council, the House of review, charged with holding the government of the day to account. It is unfortunate and disappointing that the government has not continued with the project of state significance process as was proposed, expected and accepted by the wider community.

The POSS process would have allowed an opportunity for greater insights into the impacts, the benefits, the challenges and the risks of the stadium proposal. As a result of that decision and as a member of the Legislative Council, there is not adequate information or evidence to support this long-term commitment and financial impost on the people of Tasmania. I will not be supporting any legislation which endeavours to progress the Macquarie Point Stadium.

That was stated when the government was asking the POSS process to stop. This excerpt highlights another issue with the approach to the stadium deal beyond both major parties defying the will of the public. The government has failed to give any compelling reason why they should undermine the integrity of the governmental system. Pulse Tasmania quoted the honourable Eric Abetz prior to the election as saying that, 'tough decisions are what elective representatives are for, even when they are not popular.' Specifically, he stated:

I think of John Howard introducing the goods and services tax, (GST), highly unpopular, nearly cost him government. Three years later, everybody said what on earth was that about?

Without debating on whether elected representatives are there to make electorally unpopular decisions, there is a simple fact that is being overlooked: any supposed mandate to make an unpopular decision must also come with a strong business case and provable future benefits to Tasmania. To use the GST example, it had a strong business case and it has had a lasting, positive impact on the Australian economy. The first and second Tasmanian Liberal minority governments have both failed to provide any viable business case, as I will discuss shortly, and they are committing Tasmania to another millstone of debt that will weigh heavily on our future economy.

Warnings from well-regarded and experienced economists in the Eslake and Gruen reports have been deliberately ignored, with both major parties refusing to even acknowledge the damage that they intend to impose on Tasmania's finances. Simply put, by bullishly ignoring wise counsel and good advice, the government and the opposition, in an undemocratic policy decision, are damaging the reputation and financial integrity of Tasmania. The recent Moody's ratings downgrade of Tasmania's credit rating to the lowest of any state or territory in Australia - equal to the Northern Territory, I think - is a damning indictment of the government's fiscal management. Days later, it was no surprise when S&P did the same, singling out the Macquarie Point stadium and very weak budget metrics.

After 11 years in power, the government has no-one else to blame but itself. An inevitable stadium debt blowout would be a final nail in our debt coffin. We have to acknowledge that we did have the COVID situation during that 11-year period. It's simply a bad idea. The Liberal

minority government has failed to instil confidence in its delivery of existing large-scale projects. We need only to look at the ongoing fiasco surrounding delivery and operation of the new *Spirit of Tasmania* ferries as a prime example, complete with the corporate blame game about the yet-to-be-built TasPorts wharf in East Devonport. Dare I mention the condition of our roads?

Adding to this mess, it was exasperating to see the Premier dismiss the Auditor-General and his team, who correctly raised concerns and reported the TT-Line to ASIC for trading whilst insolvent. The Premier's response followed an all-too-familiar playbook, as he called the Auditor-General's finding as just one man's opinion: an insulting and Trumpian response to a statutory regulator, one who is acting diligently to ensure a state-owned company is operating with probity and within established legislation.

What hope do we have for any open transparency on a stadium's finances, when the government operates with the cavalier 'trust us, she'll be right' attitude and shoots down the whistleblowers?

If we cannot trust the government with more straightforward and far less complex projects than the stadium, why should we, in the house of review, trust the government to manage and spend billions of unconstrained Tasmanian dollars on this financially corpulent project? Past performance is usually a sound indicator of future outcomes, so maybe we realistically need to think of the worst possible outcome, and then some, when it comes to a stadium.

My two broader concerns can be summarised quite succinctly: the stadium as it stands at Macquarie Point is a bad idea. Moreover, the government has given us no reason to take its word as gospel that it's a good idea. There is no evidence we can trust that the stadium will deliver a net benefit to Tasmanians, but plenty indicating otherwise.

A couple from Swan Bay wrote to me, providing a list of a few reasons in a nutshell why the majority of Tasmanians opposed the stadium:

- Macquarie Point is the completely wrong site due to being too small and far too environmentally hazardous.
- Demanding a stadium in order to finally be granted a licence to have a Tasmanian team was an outrageously unfair condition.
- Premier Rockliff's willingness to sign such an agreement - no questions asked - without consulting his Cabinet, the parliament - or the Tasmanian people - was equally outrageous.
- The cost of building a third stadium has blown out way past the initial estimate. No wonder several economists have stated the project is unaffordable. And it will be Tasmanian taxpayers who will bear all the cost over-runs.
- The stadium has been described as 'multi-purpose', yet various people knowledgeable about the entertainment industry and responsible for organising tours of big musical shows have all stated such gigs won't include Tasmania in their itinerary. Why would they, given the logistics

of getting equipment, stage props, lighting, sound and entourages across Bass Strait. Far too expensive.

- Claims the stadium will be economically beneficial for the communities who build them have been rubbished everywhere in the world. They don't. Most are unused and/or underused and are a drain on local economies. The cost of hiring venue for smaller events would be prohibitive. A white elephant is an excellent description for these monuments to sport.
- Claims conventions and conferences will be held at the stadium are equally optimistic. Nowhere else have such events been held in a stadium. Totally unsuitable.
- Claims the stadium will provide 'jobs, jobs, jobs' are nonsensical. Australia is struggling to find enough construction workers as it is, and there are certainly not enough in Tasmania already.
- The stadium has been accurately described as too big, too architecturally inappropriate, insensitive to its surroundings; will negatively impact the Cenotaph and do nothing to improve the enjoyment of the TSO concerts at the nearby Concert Hall.
- Over half the Tasmanian population have said consistently they don't want a new stadium. They know we don't need one and we certainly cannot afford one when our public hospitals, health and education systems are in crisis, we have far too many people living hand to mouth, living in their car or in a tent because there isn't enough public housing. This is where the priorities lie, NOT a shiny new stadium, that is a monstrous demand and really does beg the question as to whether the AFL seriously wanted to grant Tasmanian team in the first place.

The proposed Macquarie Point stadium is not the only cash cow looking to be fattened by grazing on the debt in this lush paddock. Earlier this year, surprise surprise, we were informed by the media that build costs of the proposed Kingston Centre of Excellence has blown its budget. This time from the reported \$65 million to an explosive \$105 million in just under two years - a 75 per cent increase. Indeed, the latest figure being floated around I believe is \$130 million. I had to fight tooth and nail to get a portal for the health practitioners in this state, for doctors for VAD, at \$1.5 million. That would be 50 portals just on the increase and they just click their fingers and give an extra \$70 million. Is the government budgeting on the back of a napkin? They surely would have known the \$60 million was just a pipe dream.

There was no apology, no or little explanation by the government, just an acceptance by this government who plucked an extra \$70 million from the never-never to continue with the build. Perhaps the builders took note of the Premier's certainty and bred their own cash cow to eat up some of that free money. The new Kingston cost is a live example of Shamus Mulcahy's warning on the builder's whip hand when it comes to variations and cost blowouts, especially with a weakened government client.

The \$130 million is not even included in the Mac Point stadium build costs, nor costs associated with the completed build. That's a separate bucket of AFL footy money coming from all Tasmanians. My gosh, how many of our most necessary human service providers could do

with an extra \$70 million? No questions asked: just give us the \$70 million. And it's not even part of the Mac build. It's unbelievable.

There's talk of how a stadium will grow the Tasmanian economy with untold riches, and yet there's no research out there to prove it. The truth is the opposite, with established bodies of economic metrics research showing that neither major sports events nor new stadium construction projects typically have any appreciable positive effect on income and employment at a regional or municipal level.

One factor that can make a difference is the building of an iconic structure that goes beyond its intended purpose. Think of the Eiffel Tower, as we've heard, and Pompidou Centre in Paris, the Sydney Opera House and our very own MONA. These are iconic structures that define a city and bring pride to its residents as an integrated part of the city's identity and sense of place. They're also a proper size for and visually integrated in the locations in which they are set - but we all know that MONA is not making money.

In a national and international context, Hobart is a unique city that naturally attracts high-end tourism with money to spend. It's obvious that the Macquarie Point stadium would be a Tom Sharpe-scale blot on the landscape with the architectural value of a lozenge. It will be a build that will completely overwhelm Hobart's character and irreparably change it, and not for the better.

We are letting this stadium be built right on the front of our most beautiful and iconic heritage city - one of the few left in the world - and we're going to put a stadium there. It's absolutely scandalous that's what we're doing for generations to come. That will take away the value that Hobart has to offer when people cruise up the river coming into our beautiful port.

Even major players in the visitor economy, such as Federal Group, which the stadium purports to benefit, has opposed the proposal. I was amazed that we had presentations from Federal Group - an industry group that has been known to make money out of our state. That's fine; that's part of their purview - but for them to come and say that they didn't want the stadium to go ahead is something that we should listen to. What follows are quotes I've taken from Federal Group's submission which sum up the key concerns raised - and this is not meant to dampen the enthusiasm of the 15,000 people who showed up to support the stadium, because they wouldn't know this. They went there to support their football team. They wouldn't hear the stuff that we hear. However, it's not our job to be caught up in the fervour and say, 'We've got to support this stadium because 15,000 people showed up'. We have to be listening to people like this.

Federal Group said:

Despite sustained engagement over a significant period, both through formal correspondence and informal avenues, there has been no attempt by the proponent to address, resolve or acknowledge the issues Federal Group have raised. This is not a shortfall in consultation etiquette. It is a failure of precinct-scale planning logic. A project of this magnitude and intensity, located within an already active urban waterfront, cannot function as a self-contained asset. Its footprint, construction phase, and ongoing event operations will necessarily disrupt the functioning of adjacent uses.

Our concern is not with the principle of renewal or the value of strategic infrastructure. It is with the method. A project of this scale cannot succeed if it displaces rather than integrates, or if it advances without accountability to those most directly affected. The issues raised in this submission are not matters of inconvenience. They reveal a structural contradiction between the project's stated intent to enhance the precinct and its effect on the day-to-day function, accessibility and viability of the adjacent uses.

Federal Group continued by stating:

The economic case is simply not profitable. It is net harmful. It represents a form of economic regression for the area, diminishing existing value, displacing viable activity, and imposing ongoing costs to the state without generating offsetting return. If the site were left undeveloped, the precinct would continue to deliver high-value economic outcomes consistent with its identity and urban logic. It would support future investment aligned with heritage and tourism, including adaptive reuse and mixed cultural activation. This trajectory is not speculative; it is evidenced by existing trading patterns and future investment plans already under consideration (e.g. Retlas Foundry Hotel). The stadium will not only underperform against the established economic baseline of the area into the future, but it will also actively undermine it. The stadium will generate net negative value, not just simply because it fails to produce enough benefits on its own, but because it reduces the benefit being produced by others in the area. When the full economic burden of the stadium is accounted for, even long-term non-development represents a stronger economic case. The opportunity cost lies not in its under-utilisation of the site, but in the disruption of a precinct that already delivers more.

It was explained to us by Shelley Penn in the Tasmanian Planning Commission. She gave a really good example. She said the MCG can cater for, let's say, 100,000 people. It's the scale of where it sits and fits within that landscape; it sits there quite nicely. It's not imposing. People can move in and out of it. The Mac Point stadium, at 23,000, the scale of that, in the limited space that it is, has a huge impact on the surrounds and that environment. If you think about going to the MCG, although bigger grounds over there, where this is going to sit, right at the heart of our city, is just wrong.

I can also appreciate those individuals for the Mac Point stadium will probably dismiss and downplay Federal Group's viewpoint by saying it is looking after its own interests. Do these interests conflict with those of Tasmania though? Federal Group, in investing millions of dollars into developing high-quality hotels and hospitality in Sullivans Cove, has absolutely abided by the planning and heritage rules of that particularly sensitive location. Federal Group has done this willingly and with great empathy and yet the government has torn up the rule book for its stadium as a direct insult to proper process. The Premier seems to think these rules are for thee and not for me. Of course Federal Group is concerned in this sense, because by failing to abide by planning requirements for this location, the government will detriment each and every business in the vicinity.

Federal Group is a longtime successful employer in the Tasmanian hospitality and tourism industry and is well placed to provide commentary on business propositions and major

infrastructure builds in Tasmania. It is involved in most of them. It has skin in the game and a proven track record. We must take note of its rational thinking as a profit-driven entity. We must respect its knowledge and experience. If a business with intimate knowledge and every reason to want a stadium to do well is concerned, why is not the government?

Furthermore, as a key member of the stakeholder group, which is the hospitality and tourism industry, they raised concerns about the unwillingness of the government to address their input. To me, this once again shows that the Macquarie Point stadium is an under-prepared and ill-thought-out venture. It baffles me that the government would not work alongside business enterprises such as Federal Group. The quotes from Federal Group and its entire submission underpin an ongoing and fundamental failure in planning, preparation and consideration given to the stadium.

The failure to address concerns of key community, political and business stakeholders has permeated not only the proposed stadium itself, but dealings with the AFL - interactions with important checks on governmental exercise of power and the deal which the Premier has unilaterally committed us to.

The numbers simply do not work. The case for the stadium made by the Tasmanian Liberal government relies on unrealistic numbers, hyperbole and spin, using prominent AFL players and ex-players as financial and economic experts while ignoring the real economists. It overlooks existing criticisms and concerns, and disregards the primary needs of Tasmanians.

Dr Peggy James provided a very thorough submission. In her email to me, she writes:

As you must know:

- The billion plus public funding will seriously compromise the state's ongoing budget position.
- All stakeholders concede that the benefit-cost ratio for the project is less than 1.0, confirming more costs than benefits for Tasmanians.
- The stadium will only have a few thousand extra seats compared to Tasmania's existing AFL stadiums; and will stand empty for most of the year.
- Independent expert reports and public polling show that both experts and most Tasmanians oppose the stadium project.

Dr James then added:

As a planner, I'm frankly incredulous that the future of the strategically important and complex Macquarie Point site is currently being determined by a mainland football executive and a ... Premier. Accordingly, I fear not only for Tasmania's future budget and essential services, but also for the future of the Hobart region and informed democratic decision-making.

If you feel that you require more information on the matter, I will direct you to the 100+ Proponents reports and diagrams, 14 agency submissions, 800+ public submissions, and the TPC Panel and Gruen reports currently available

online ... I would respectfully suggest there is more than enough information available to understand why the proposal should be rejected.

Dr James continued by writing:

If you are interested in the issue of construction jobs associated with the proposed stadium, then I would urge you to read about the health and safety risks to the construction workers at the still-contaminated Macquarie Point site. And I would urge you to ponder the alternative construction and other jobs that hundreds of millions of dollars of public spending elsewhere could provide.

I turn now to the AFL stadium deal itself and, more importantly, the viability of AFL stadiums in their own right. For those with eagle eyes and interest in the AFL, the release of the AFL fixtures for 2026 may have drawn their attention. In 2026, and prior to the finals, both the Marvel Stadium and the MCG will host around 45 games each. For both stadia that's the working annual average. Both now have a concert season. The MCG hosts Test cricket, while Marvel is the home of the Big Bash team, the Renegades. Both stadia host in the vicinity of 65 to 75 arena events a year. Don't be misled, this is where the revenue comes from to make these venues viable as there's a degree of subsidy for AFL games, especially so with the AFL-owned Marvel Stadium.

At the MCG you could reliably suggest that nine or 10 individual events each year attract crowds of 75,000 to 100,000 people. The AFL Grand Final, the Anzac Day and Boxing Day Tests are jewels in the crown. With a smaller capacity many football games at Marvel Stadium - under the roof - also attract capacity crowds and their concerts just about lift the roof off the stadium.

It's not widely known that the master plan for Docklands Stadium, which was built at the cost of \$450 million in the late 1990s, was supposed to host 100 arena events. That's 100 events on the playing surface over the course of a year. At that time there was also an agreement with the AFL and the then Docklands Stadium owners, and this is critical, which mandated that the AFL would fixture approximately 50 AFL matches a season, as well as the occasional final. This provided the stadium with financial security. Before too long, 100 events proved fanciful. It was never going to happen. Nonetheless, initially it had been felt such a volume of content was needed to cover all stadium costs and make the venue profitable for its owners and investors. That is relevant to our situation. It was felt that 100 on-field events were needed to ensure the stadium was viable.

In that initial effort to host 100 events the stadium incurred both financial challenges and reputational damage. Many would remember the long-running furore over the venue's playing surface. Arena events other than AFL, such as concerts, RMIT graduation ceremonies, State of Origin Rugby League, resulted in some excellent revenue streams including admission fees and corporate packages - that's dining, admission, drinks and VIP seats - as well as general retail and hospitality returns.

On the other side of the ledger, the downside was huge. It came in the form of turf replacement costs, particularly when concerts were backed up against sports such as AFL, Big Bash League and A-League fixtures. The reputational damage occurred because - often in full glare of television audiences - the turf was not replaced or sufficiently prepared for upcoming

events. Twenty-five years later, I'm told that the stadium area management team has become expert at managing the ground in conjunction with the retractable roof. However, it is still a delicate process.

The arena turf management team - some have been in that role for years - would say that they can make the turf presentable, but they can't weave magic. In other words, if multiple concerts are jammed up against AFL matches, cricket or soccer, there will be issues. In a nutshell, if the arena calendar doesn't provide breathing space and a rest for the ground, the playing surface falters. If the turf management team had a preference, the turf will be grown in situ. In other words, it will be regrown naturally. While the laying of new turf generally ensures the arena looks good on television, it may be hard under foot, slippery and may even lead to inconsistent bounce. In other words, not only a roof but also the hosting of major concerts can result in unforeseen challenges. Do we want that scenario in Tasmania? Are we prepared to risk it? And who has explained how it will work? The answer is: no-one as yet.

Undeniably, for the entirety of the Docklands Stadium's life, the AFL's agreement that 45 to 50 games will be fixed each season provided the venue with financial security. Also, with the Southern Cross train station located nearby and the closure of Waverley Park, which was the AFL's home ground, the Docklands could not fail.

Macquarie Point has none of these assets, advantages or guarantees. At the moment the proposed stadium at the most will host seven to eight, maybe 11 or 12 home games. It will also host five or six Big Bashes. It may even get three or four smaller concerts. That's 22 or 23 potential capacity events on the arena a year. There is no guarantee that Test cricket will be played under the roof. It's not just a case of plucking some big soccer games or other sports. The venue management will need to look at the stadium close to 50 or 60 times a year if the stadium's bottom lines look anywhere near respectable at the end of the financial year.

My other advice is that a fixed roof is more than likely to present added problems. A translucent, immovable roof will be something entirely different and new for the AFL. We will be the guinea pigs. Questions such as who has made this judgment and the rationale for such infrastructure have not been answered. I was advised that the key personnel at the Dockland Stadium, up until a few weeks ago, had not been consulted. They comprise the groups that manage the only roofed stadium for the AFL code in Australia, yet it's my understanding their advice has not yet been sought. A roofed stadium for AFL codes in Australia, yet this advice has not been sought.

Turf requires sunlight, movement of air and lots of water for a healthy surface. The constant closure of the roof immediately negates against a healthy surface. It's why the owners and the executive of the Docklands approximately 20 years ago went to the Netherlands to explore the possibility of purchasing grow lights which add warmth to promote both a healthy turf and grass growth, particularly in the dormant winter months. At the time such infrastructure was being used by English Premier League and European Football stadia. I am reliably informed that when the grow lights were first used at the Docklands, the power bills went through the roof. In other words, a roof adds a lot more expense, both in terms of power bills and the need for constant watering. These are issues that, I'm told we won't understand until such a proposed stadium exists.

It should also be noted that only a few years after the Dockland Stadium opened in the early 2000s, entrepreneur Kerry Stokes and Channel 7 chose to relinquish the stadium's

ownership. Stokes obviously discovered it was not a cash cow, so the then stadium senior executive was given the onerous task to find new owners. The then management team at the Dockland Stadium produced a collaboration of financial and superannuation institutions to invest and assume governance and fiscal responsibility. That model existed until the end of 2017 until the AFL purchased the venue several years ago.

During the previous 17 years, I am told ownership comprised something of a revolving door. In other words, financial institutions came and went. In terms of the owners, there was not a huge amount of longevity of tenure. Today, under the AFL's ownership management, Marvel still annually hosts a similar number of arena events. There are approximately 75 events, which includes about 45 AFL events as per the initial agreement.

At Macquarie Point we are looking at between seven and 12 matches. Financially it does not stack up. I know that we are supposed to have seven games in Hobart and four in Launceston, but I heard it stated in the forum that the cost of those four games in Launceston would be around \$1.5 million a year. Over a period of five years, it would cost about \$6 million or \$7 million if they played those games. That's why I've got some concerns that within five years the games won't be played in Launceston because of the financial implications.

To protect some of the revenue for the owners the well-known Medallion Club was implemented. The Medallion Club's 5000 to 6000 members became the stadium's critical financial generator. Membership costs began at \$5000 per year. I don't think we have 6000 people in Tasmania who could afford to pay \$5000 a year. Extending membership contracts means discounts but the sales team always strive to generate the longest possible contracts, which is six to 10 years. More often than not, memberships were bought by big, medium-sized and smaller corporations for their clients and staff. I wonder how Tasmanians would feel about the formation of an elite and exclusive high rollers Medallion Club. It would include the stadium's best seats but to secure a membership you will need to contribute that sort of money. How many people do we know have \$5000 to prop up a stadium? Maybe the government knows of a few.

Mr President, to highlight the Docklands Stadium's hardline approach, for 12 years a policy was implemented which refused patrons permission to bring commercially prepared and purchased foods and drink into the stadium. For instance, Nando's and Subway opened retail outlets within a 'punt kick' from some of the main entrance gate. However, the stadium's events day staff were directed not to allow patrons carrying such products into the venue to make sure the hospitality contractors inside had a captive market to justify their high rents and high prices. The policy was changed around 2013 following several years of negative press and complaints from patrons.

Prior to the AFL buying the stadium I am advised the venue generated an income of approximately \$100 million per year, but still there was a view from the owners that their return on investment was insufficient. Publicly, the AFL Docklands tenants - Western Bulldogs, St Kilda, North Melbourne and to a lesser extent Essendon and Carlton - constantly demanded a greater match day return. This was despite the fact that clubs had signed contracts with the stadium owners and, in most cases, as I understand, the contracts were countersigned by the AFL. Much of this controversy can found on Google.

I suppose what I'm trying to say is it's just not the build; it's the operation and the risks that we're going to be taking with our limited resources. A lot of these risks won't be known

until we've put a roof on a stadium that hasn't been tried anywhere else, a translucent roof. Only when that roof goes up, we heard from Cricket Tasmania, would there be a possibility of signing off. What if it's not good or if it doesn't work?

The biggest critics were those clubs that attracted the smallest crowds. Clubs such as North Melbourne, Western Bulldogs and St Kilda publicly demanded more revenue from the stadium even though the bulk of their rusted-on supporters were members, which meant that in most cases they paid their membership fees directly to their club before a season commenced. In other words, those clubs weren't contributing greatly to the stadium's revenue and debt recovery.

Still today, with a multinational catering company, a brewer, security, cleaners - all operating under contracts and monopoly arrangements - plus significant Victoria Police costs, there are many, many sticky fingers in the stadium's financial pie.

We are told the Tasmanian government stadium will be a different model. It's known that the new Tasmanian stadium's Chief Executive, James Avery, was close to influential and prominent Australian economic and political leader, Tony Shepherd, who I believe is still the Chair of the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust. It's probable that James, in collaboration with Tony and the AFL, will have an outline as to how a government-owned stadium might work. However, despite such a powerful collaboration it needs to be noted that the one thing the AFL club, GWS, also run by Tony and James, has failed to do is build big game day attendances at Giants Stadium, which is just 26 minutes from Sydney CBD.

GWS recently boasted 36,000 members, although such a number does not seem to transpose itself into 'Melbourne-like' attendances on match day. When GWS was conceived, the AFL would have projected that the overall membership and match day crowds by 2025 would be far higher than they constantly are.

The point is that the AFL can't control the numbers that attend matches and that stands to be one of the biggest challenges in Tasmania given the state's decentralisation and the distance to Hobart from the footy heartland in the north-west. My view is that for the Tasmanian team to be viable and therefore successful it needs the physical, emotional and financial support of all sports-loving Tasmanians, as well as expats nationally and overseas. A financial member of the club is equally important whether they come from Zeehan, Port Sorell, Circular Head, Devonport, Ulverston, Sandy Bay, or for that matter from Brisbane or even London or New York.

If arena 'content' is insufficient at Macquarie Point, which on current estimates it seems probable will be the case, in time the AFL will shoot from the hip and fixture all its Tasmanian games at the Hobart venue. The Launceston matches will no longer occur. Bear in mind that the AFL controls the fixture list and where the high value games will be played. Without too much effort you could anticipate the AFL will convince the broadcasters to mount an argument which supports their case. To suggest they won't move the goal posts is naive. It is not the way the AFL operates.

It was wonderful to see the 15,000 people here at the rally. I know that there were people from all over the state. The people I stood next to at the rally were from Burnie, people I knew, and they had travelled down specifically, but that was from the state. If you look back at over

the last four or five years, most of your bigger crowds have been in Launceston. Four to five thousand on average in Hobart; 12,000 to 15,000 in Launceston.

What will it eventually look like, Mr President? I'm advised that with 10 or 11 games in Hobart, four or five in Launceston, maybe seven or eight in Hobart, and draw your own conclusions as to what that will mean for membership statewide and support of the Devils from Tasmania's north and north-west regions.

I don't believe throwing everything at Hobart will be a success. My beliefs are based on some of the information above. By all means base the team and its players in Hobart. It makes sense to locate the team in the capital, but at least for several years games should be shared between Hobart and Launceston. The club and the AFL can establish patterns and collate data related to crowds, memberships, corporate support, et cetera, and from there, a clearer picture will emerge about the determination of locations and where games can be played and the establishment of key infrastructure.

While purely a football issue to make Tasmania as competitive as possible, shouldn't the club be afforded the home ground advantage? Hawthorn has become nearly unbeatable at York Park, mainly due to Tasmania's unique playing conditions - the conditions in which Darrel Baldock from Latrobe learnt to play football.

Interchanging locations between the north and the south would be a massive bonus for the new team. If the team is well coached, developed and organised, and a combination of experienced players and young talent is recruited, the club is likely to make a solid start. From that club's foundation, membership will flourish. Playing the bulk of the matches under a roof, however, will negate a home ground advantage. In 25 years, only two of the Docklands tenant clubs, that's Essendon and Western Bulldogs, have won premierships. Essendon won the premiership in 2000, the first year of Docklands Stadium. The team was already a powerhouse, and some would say its failure to progress to the AFL grand final in 1999 was the impetus for its success in 2000.

Tasmania is ready for its own AFL team and we're ready to have it based in Hobart. It just makes sense for the games for the first three or four years while we're getting our feet to be played between Launceston and Hobart. That would give our government a chance to fix the coffers so that it's in a better situation than it is at the moment. What we're doing is throwing our team in with the stadium because we think it's got to work.

The expenses of running a team and a stadium at the same time when we've got spiralling debt is not good business case, it's not good management. You wouldn't do that in your business. You wouldn't walk into a brand-new business, build a brand-new shop, get a brand-new team without knowing if it was going to be successful. You would get in there; you would work for three or four years and then you'd build something. If they did that and the government had that approach instead of being fisted into this stupid deal that we've made, we wouldn't be having this argument and there would have been more than 15,000 people there and there would be 15,000 people in Launceston at the rally.

This is the wrong decision and it's this place that is going to let it go through. To draw your own conclusions, Mr President, I don't believe throwing everything at Hobart will be a success. No, I don't want to hear it again. From there the club and the AFL can establish patterns

and collect data while purely a football issue to make Tasmania as competitive possible. Shouldn't the club be afforded the home ground advantage?

Possibly what best summarises the business model for Marvel Stadium is a slogan and mantra which was adopted during its first 17 years of private ownership. I believe it's fair to say the AFL, which purchased the stadium near the end of 2016, has kept a similar approach to running the stadium. The slogan is, 'Content is King'.

I'm going over this because it's really important that when we make a decision, we have all the information that we need to make a decision. It's just not about the team today and building the stadium. It's about the ongoing success of it. There is no evidence to suggest that we are anywhere near the figure of content.

The other slogan which has made its way into the public domain is that the Marvel Stadium is the busiest in the world. In other words, the action on the ground barely ceases and revenue is also generated by a public car park, approximately 2,500 parking spaces. The stadium is always open for business in terms of conferences, seminars, gala lunches and dinners.

Another phrase I'm told is often used is that 'it's barely worth a round of drinks'. It was made in regard to conferences and seminars. The commercial drivers of the stadium were predominantly interested in the big-ticket items. It's the major events such as big AFL clashes, big concerts, NRL State of Origin and clashes such as the Australian Wallabies versus the British and Irish Lions which paid the bills, it paid the salary of workers and kept the owners of the stadium satisfied.

I also take this opportunity to read a very pertinent statement a constituent sent me regarding this matter. My apologies for my pronunciation of this:

I live in Hokkaido, Japan's Tasmania, population of 5 million. Sapporo, the capital city, has 2 million. Sapporo built a huge dome just like the one proposed for Hobart.

It had everything going for it, healthy city coffers to pay for the dome, World Cup Soccer games, megastars to tour, a major baseball team, subway to the site, 230 flights a day, a nearby population of 115 million, and under 6 hours flight away from 50% of the World's population. Yet, the Sapporo Dome is now a financial disaster.

The big international acts? Almost none. It's usually domestic tours or K-pop groups. Superstars like The Rolling Stones and Eagles played there once, nearly 20 years ago, and never came back. Why? Because shipping 60 truckloads of stage gear across water to Hokkaido costs a fortune.

For Tasmania, it's the same story across Bass Strait.

Even being the home of the Prefectures Professional Soccer team and with naming rights from a huge conglomerate, it barely breaks even. It struggles to fill with popular local acts, sometimes rugby games and the rest of the time it manages to give out 100 to 120 small events a year - flea market style. It

survives with a skeleton staff and part time workers when there is an event large enough to open the shops and bars.

The five million people have to provide money to attract acts and to attract concerts.

The Premier and the Tasmanian government have also continuously stated that the stadium will provide aspiring Tasmanian youth with another reason to stay in the state. The Premier stated in January 2025:

We will not be deterred from creating jobs, prosperity and opportunity for Tasmania. Especially young Tasmanians that want a future in our beautiful state ... We will never let our young people down who want to dream big.

I've got to put this on the record. I was a teacher, I know that young people are exciting, and they deserve everything they want, they've got hope and all of that. I get it. I was a physical education teacher, so I understand the whole sports thing.

My honourable colleagues, I put it to you that this argument ignores the reality of Tasmanian sports, recreation and lifestyles. It is wordsmithing spin, trying to build a solid foundation of thought based on platitudes, and social and emotional guilt. We have any number of sports and arenas in which our young people excel beyond simply Australian Rules football. Rather, soccer, cricket, basketball, hockey, cycling, athletics, swimming and each have been growing in popularity and participation in these sports and continues to have a natural ebb and flow. These sports all need significant amounts of funding investment to upgrade their facilities to ensure that our young people continue to participate. For a fraction of the cost of the stadium deal we could support these sports for decades. We are talking a few million rather than hundreds and hundreds of millions.

We have to understand that football, even though there has been an increase in recent times, is an irregular blip. There has been a kick or a bump in activity without a stadium. It's because we've had a 10-foot devil on the steps of Parliament House the other day called Rum'un that excited and had all the people in their tops and jumpers. There's no stadium built, and a lot of those young people wouldn't even realise that.

For instance, an item on Football Tasmania's Strategic Plan - when I'm talking football now, I'm talking the about the round ball - 2024-2028 Competitions and Pathways Pillars included the delivery of a Tasmanian A-League club. To minimise confusion. Mr President, in my speech when I referred to Football Tasmania, I'm referring to soccer - the game played around the world and not just in Australia. Such a licence would support the aspirations of thousands of Tasmanian girls and boys in playing for the Matildas and the Socceroos with a comparatively small investment. Soccer is Tasmania's most played team sport. It has 34,000 people involved at all levels of the game, compared to Australian Rules at 23,000 - a figure that's 25 per cent uplift on the year before due to the publicity and extra funding for AFL in Tasmania and includes the school-based Auskick program.

It's good that Auskick has improved, but it's still 10,000 people behind soccer. The parents I speak to love their football, whether it be AFL or whether it be soccer. I know parents are a little bit more concerned about the contact as kids get older with football, and I will just leave it at that.

However, for every dollar Tasmanian soccer receives in funding, \$28 is invested in Tasmanian Australian Rules football coffers. For every dollar we give to soccer, we give \$28 to football. Yet there are 34,000 involved in soccer and 23,000 in Australian Rules. As a phys-ed teacher, I just want kids to get fit and active. If it's \$28 for a kid to play football, and it's \$1 for a kid to play soccer, I think we've chosen the wrong sport or football code - and that comes from somebody who's played football.

Our numbers are decreasing. It's because of our volunteer base. It's because you used to look on the west coast and there used to be six or eight teams playing. You look on the east coast and you would have had teams, and you lose some of those teams - even on the north-west coast, and some revive back, which is great. But if you look at the future, what's the future of our sport? We talk about a 50-year stadium. Is AFL going to be the sport in 50 years or is soccer? If we look at those two sports, soccer is the world game.

Whilst I do have an AFL background, I am the patron of the hugely successful Devonport Strikers Club and the patron of the Devonport Junior Soccer Association. In the middle of the year, 141 junior soccer teams played in Devonport on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday long weekend and the Lakoseljac Cup was played at the Valley Road complex. I'm still on the appeals tribunal of the North West Football League and I have been for 25 years. I was the playing coach at the Latrobe Football Club, so I love my football as well. When I see the comparisons of what we're spending and what the people are playing, and what we're going to put at Macquarie Point that will overshadow our city, I don't think it's worthwhile.

Going back to the AFL, we already have two perfectly serviceable venues in Launceston and Bellerive, which have catered for many games of AFL, Test Cricket and other community sports and events. I'm not against a new build; I think a new build has potential. I really do. I don't agree that that's the place to put it. I agree that it could be Hobart, and I think there are other greenfield areas. We just have to improve our method of transport to get from that point to that point, to put our stadium in a better spot. That's doable. That method of transport could also help to go out to the JackJumpers' games and we could use their car parks. We could come down the river, and you wouldn't have the angst that we have now.

We wouldn't upset the RSL. We wouldn't upset our Aboriginal groups who have a sacred site. We wouldn't upset the view down the river if we can move our stadium out to where the JackJumpers play. It makes sense to me. Where's our community expanding to now? We're going out to Brighton. That's going to be the geographic centre of Hobart in 50 years, because we have no place than to go that way. Yet we're going to have all these people from all over coming into our little city centre and we have all these problems that exist.

The Hobart City Council report says that of course the money is going to be good, but everything else they said in their report is not good. Everything else they raised was not good and we're ignoring that. We're ignoring that here, and it's not right.

I initially wrote a response to this legislation before the last election. I wrote that 'the deal really is nonsensical and if it wasn't so serious, I, like other members, would be waiting for another *Utopia* video humorously portraying the Tasmanian circumstances'. Just on 20 November, Pulse reported that the ABC has commissioned an entire satirical series on this with jokes that write themselves. The stadium debacle has turned Tasmania into a national joke - I don't think they expect us to take it on - 570,000 people and you're going to build a roofed stadium, and you're \$10 billion in debt?

Did people realise that very few Tasmanians - and it could be because they have to travel away - male or female, play in the AFL? In the last 25 years we have averaged less than four young men. That's not to say we shouldn't have a stadium and we shouldn't have to aspire our kids to do that. We have the talent here. We don't have the population. They don't have the competition when they're young, but that will happen.

Furthermore, young Tasmanians aspire to many things. The arts, music and creative sectors fundamentally underpin Tasmanian excellence. There are many areas we want our young people to dream big. However, if this financial white elephant gets passed, those Tasmanians will not be able to be financially supported by this government to realise their dreams. They're not going to have the venues for their dance productions; they're not going to have the venues for their swimming pools. Those other sports are not going to have the funding because there won't be any funds there. It doesn't matter if we commit \$26 million a year over the next four years if there's no money there.

If we look to economic success and return on investment, the stadium is an absolute dud; with an estimated return of less than \$0.50 of every dollar, unless you're the Coordinator-General, and that was based on one of the earlier and cheaper cost estimates. If we're truly looking at the future, let's look to Ireland. After a three-year pilot, Ireland had just implemented and expanded a basic income scheme for the arts that will provide a weekly taxable payment of about \$850 a week to 2200 participants to provide some assurity and stability to those in creative industries. The three-year pilot demonstrated an average cost benefit ratio of €1.39 for every €1 of public money invested in the scheme. This ratio went up to €1.75 so far for 2025, investing in the arts. Here, in Tasmania we close down art courses. With Hobart's internationally recognised connection with the arts, can we leave the AFL alone and go to town following Ireland's lead with MONA as our champion?

There's a quote from the editorial of *The New York Times* in May this year that can draw us further into this line of argument. It said:

... stadiums are monuments to the poverty of our civic ambitions and our inability to summon the collective will to use the land we have for the things we need. They are distractions from our inability to build anything else.

I will say that again:

... stadiums are monuments to the poverty of our civic ambitions and our inability to summon the collective will to use the land we have for the things we need. They are distractions from our inability to build anything else.

A new stadium will come with an incredible opportunity cost, one that will prevent us from supporting other equally worthy activities, many of which have a far higher following than AFL.

As mentioned, we've had a few Tasmanians get to play in the AFL, but thousands and thousands of young Tasmanians have different interests. For over \$1 billion the stadium supports primarily one sport, with questions about its efficacy for cricket or likely use for other sports. Maybe the odd concert, conference or dinner here and there; so now we can call it a 'multipurpose stadium'. If one needs an example, the Tasmanian JackJumpers have shown above and beyond Tasmanian excellence in sport for a mere \$20 million in a promised

community multi-sport facility and \$68 million for the Derwent Entertainment Centre. That's good value for money, nobody would deny that, and it brought our state together. It pulled our Tasmania together after COVID, it had something to do. Everybody, even people who didn't play basketball, got on board. This one is driving people apart and it shouldn't have happened that way.

Earlier this year we heard from the honourable member for Elwick regarding the desperate need for substantial investment in community basketball infrastructure across Tasmania, noting that is the number one sport for adults in Tasmania and number three for children, growing by more than 9 per cent each year since 2020. The recent motion stated that there was a shortage of 31 courts statewide, and investment in the state as well as Greater Hobart is needed.

I put to you that it is not solely a problem with basketball, rather facilities for all sports in Tasmania are significantly below standard and need substantial investment. Rather than investing nearly a billion dollars into a stadium directed at tourists and a few select players, the government could improve the state of all sports for Tasmanians. I get it, we have members of my age and little bit younger and a little bit older who want to watch a Tasmanian football team. We get it, they've been wanting it for years; they want to do anything for it, they want a stadium because it's our ticket to get a team, but it's not the sport of the future.

Victoria Morton, the president of the South Hobart Football Club, and I'm talking soccer here, wrote me an email outlining the perspective of Tasmanian soccer participants, highlighting many of the issues I've just discussed. Particularly, Victoria wrote:

My message is simple: this stadium is being designed for elite AFL and cricket, not for the thousands of Tasmanian children who play sport every weekend for fitness, friendship and community connection.

For years, government investment has overwhelmingly favoured AFL - ovals, elite facilities, high performance centres and now a new stadium with long-term commitments to support an AFL team. With the recently-signed cricket agreement, the stadium is clearly being built for elite professional sport. It is difficult to understand how AFL became the Government's sport of choice when participation metrics show that football (soccer) is the sport most Tasmanian children actually play. There has been no transparent comparison of sports or assessment of community need by this Government. Fairness in funding should reflect participation and community impact, but that has not occurred here.

Meanwhile, other sports in Tasmania are left to feed off the scraps offered through small competitive grants, and I fear even these will disappear under the huge debt this project will place on all of us. As a taxpayer, the debt I will carry will not support my sport of choice, my volunteer hours or my 20 years of advocating for better facilities. Instead, it will be used to prop up the AFL and an extravagant vanity-project stadium at Macquarie Point. Everything we have worked for - fair access, better facilities, recognition of football's growth - risks being wiped away because one sport has been given everything while the rest of us are left begging for scraps that will no longer exist.

When we sought modest support for Tasmania's entry into the National Second Division - less than one per cent of what is being committed to AFL, and a genuine national pathway for young Tasmanian footballers - the response from Government was not enthusiastic. Soccer continues to be treated as an afterthought, despite carrying the greatest load in community and grassroots participation.

As I have stated repeatedly, imagine what our teams could do with just a fraction of the spending of the state on the AFL. She then went on to say:

Soccer is not asking for billions. We're asking for fair, proportionate investment that reflects participation levels and the community value football provides. Your decision will determine whether thousands of children get the facilities they urgently need or whether football and community sport are sidelined once again. This is not anti-AFL. Many of us support a Tasmanian team. But not at any cost, and not when every other sport risks being left behind. This decision is not just about a stadium - it is about what kind of sporting future Tasmania chooses for its children.

Earlier this year, I received related sentiments from another constituent. He stated:

Proponents' emotional claims around young people running out onto a specialised stadium are just emotional appeals. If the government was serious about fostering junior sport with development pathways, it would be spending money on grassroots facilities, clubs, coaching, equipment and equal access to all sports, not just the elite level of a specific sport.

It is well known that physical literacy and activity is declining in young people. We need to support every opportunity for young people to engage in physical activities and sport, and not just the government's preferred AFL. Supporting a wide base of grassroots sports will make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and their children. A new stadium will encourage them to be involved, encourage them to support, but it won't always encourage them where we need it to.

I received a recent submission on the AFL stadium that also highlighted various probity issues within the AFL. Notably, it mentioned the symbiotic nature of the AFL and gambling, and the risk of the stadium becoming another stage for gambling. Amongst other things, it also raised the illegal drug culture; steroid abuse; sexism concerns in the AFL; the health risks such as alarming concussions and head injuries; and finally, accountability issues. I did have one parent, and I'm sure they won't mind, say to me:

We've got 50 girls playing football and they have one changeroom or one toilet. That's not fair. Build the stadium.

I wrote back and said thank you very much for your point of view, I really appreciate it, blah blah blah, but I couldn't see the connection. If they said to me, of the money you're going to spend on that building, if you gave us a couple of hundred thousand, we could build another toilet, another change room at our football ground for our girls, I could have understood that reasoning.

On that gut note, gambling addiction in Tasmania is already a huge issue. Having chaired the select committee inquiry into gambling, it's clear that the government has failed to act on many of the recommendations of that report. A high school teacher and mother wrote to me in mid-October with a well referenced email reflecting on the peril that gambling poses to younger Tasmanians. Some highlights of that email that I would like to reflect on include:

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation CEO, Shane Lucas, observes, 'Young people are given the impression that gambling on sport is normal and risk-free.' Likewise, the benefits of children's sports are well supported, but research also tallies the negative health of youth exposed to sophisticated gambling campaigns.

The rise in youth gambling correlates with the rise in gambling advertising. Grattan Institute reveals that gambling normalisation starts young and advertising is a major culprit. The Australia Institute reports the gambling industry spent \$239 million on advertising last year. AFL sold streaming rights to Foxtel (formerly owned by News Corp, now DAZN) and Seven media for \$4.5 billion, in order to on-sell to gambling advertisers. The Guardian have self-imposed a ban on gambling ads, while Nine, Seven and News Corp are yet to follow. News Corp currently owns punters.com.au, Racenet, and the Las Vegas online gambling investment fund, Tekkorp, and recently targeted Pointsbet in an unsuccessful bid. DAZN's chief executive, Shay Segev, said: 'The convergence of sports media and betting is the future.'

On March 13th, 2025, the *Financial Review* reported the pubs and clubs lobby group, the Australian Hotels Association, funded and successfully lobbied the Federal Government to prevent the banning of gambling ads, which also acted to protect AFL and NRL income. Yet according to the AFL Fan Association's survey of 3000, 75% of AFL fans, who rally around grassroots community football, are concerned and wish to ban gambling advertising. One viewer recorded 70 gambling ads in a single game.

AFL sponsor, Tabcorp, whose CEO is former AFL boss, Gillon McLachlan, our own Devils Stadium contract architect, specialise in online gambling, is recently being investigated for money laundering!

The international AFL sponsor, Sportsbetters, is being investigated for breaches of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism laws. Anglicare Tasmania warns sports betting is hooking a new generation of gamblers. This year the AFL sought to increase sports betting takings, which encourages betting agents to coopt harmful micro-inducements.

The gambling industry benefits from the 'not-for-profit' status of sports teams who not only avoid tax but receive free prime public land, infrastructure, and public funding for their businesses. Since 2022, AFL donates a token 10% of profits to community grassroots football. Is this a fair deal for our community? Is it a good return for your taxpayer subsidies?

In 2023, the Australian parliament released 'You Win Some You Lose Some', the Murphy Report into online gambling and gambling advertising which

recommended 31 gambling reforms to be implemented over a period of 3 years. Not one yet has been implemented.

A Tasmanian-born academic also wrote to me with Australian and international research on the impacts of stadiums, pointing to three particular peer-reviewed papers. Of those papers, two particularly stood out to me as very important in discussing the prevalence of gambling in the AFL, and the role that the new 'smart' stadiums have as communications and technology infrastructure designed to enable advertising and real-time gambling, benefiting the sporting league rather than communities which house them. With the ban to block young people who are under 16 from accessing various social media platforms about to begin, what is going to be done to block gambling advertising from AFL games in Tasmania? This is both on-ground and in-TV advertising, and will such ads be banned in our existing stadiums and the new one?

Moving on, a common theme in the letters and the emails I've received on this matter are concerns regarding the use of the land. The heritage impacts, damage to the Hobart cityscape and the continued issue with remediation each provide a reason against a stadium build. Just as importantly, it's been brought to my attention that there are better uses for this land which should not impose the same difficulties in planning and social, economic or cultural costs as the stadium.

Tasmania relies on its heritage to attract visitors, and its heritage offerings and relatively visual peacefulness are signs of a significant part of the attractiveness of Tasmania. The stadium, especially how and where it is currently proposed, will impose significant risks to this heritage asset.

I take this opportunity to read excerpts from a submission by a constituent who has a lifelong record in heritage conservation, advisory roles in government heritage bodies as well as private advisory groups. David Kernke wrote to me the following:

If approval is granted to develop a stadium on this site, not only will it have an immediate detrimental impact on the adjoining heritage precinct of Hunter Island, the Constitution Dock and Salamanca precincts due to its size, bulk, scale and built form, there are very real prospects that it could sound the death knell for the adjoining historic precincts and indeed the City of Hobart, by paving the way for future inappropriate development. This is incredibly serious. We are at a crossroads here and you, the elected representatives of our state, must carefully decide whether or not to sanction a proposed stadium development on Macquarie Point. A stadium on another site that does not threaten our built heritage and tourism drawing power is not an issue. But a stadium on Macquarie Point is a big issue and a big problem. That being the case, may I respectfully ask that you carefully consider the economic benefits to Tasmania that our unique built heritage brings to the state.

Whilst only a handful of Australia's early buildings from colonial times survive in the mainland cities of Australia, that is not the case in Tasmania. In Hobart we are fortunate that many of these wonderful assets have survived - gifted to the inhabitants of Tasmania by the legacy of our forebears. However, this situation can change quickly if inappropriate and short-sighted decisions are made by governments. If approval is granted for a stadium to be built at Macquarie Point, Hobart could slowly morph into just

another Australian capital city, devoid of character and historic architecture, but with a stadium. If a stadium is developed on a site other than Macquarie Point, a site that does not threaten our unique tourism, drawing built heritage and unique capital city, then that will be a great bonus, a great decision and an excellent outcome for Tasmania and all Tasmanians.

If we build a new stadium, but not at Macquarie Point, we will get the same benefits. Sure, we might not have so many people walk through town to find a bar after a game of football, but I'm sure there will be enough who will get on the train and come back or the buses will come and the boats or the ferry that have to accommodate in the city centre here anyway.

To reiterate, the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point, with its massive scale, height and modern construction will overbear this historic area and form an entirely unsympathetic backdrop to Hobart's most important heritage precinct at Sullivans Cove/Hunter Island. The damage of this colossal and dominating intrusion, including that over at Constitution Dock and Salamanca, will be irreparable and is likely to lead to future inappropriate development throughout the immediate heritage precincts in Hobart City, a 'domino effect', forever changing our unique city.

If a stadium, subject to the normal planning processes is developed, or redeveloped, on a site other than Macquarie Point, that does not threaten our unique tourism drawing built heritage and unique capital city, then that will be a great bonus, a great decision and an excellent outcome for Tasmania and all Tasmanians.

I can just hear other politicians and other people saying, 'Look, let's just build it. It's been so long now let's just build it and get it done with. Even though we know this is not the best decision because it's going to impact our state forever. It's going to impact, but let's just build it because we've got the design, we've got the money, we've got the licence, we will get the team'. Let us build it, but build it somewhere else so we don't wreck what's already beautiful in Hobart.

Mr Kernke also noted the recent NRE commissioned research into the contribution of built heritage to Tasmania. Particularly, it underpins our tourism and construction industries, community liveability in Tasmania's overall brand. Moreover, it directly supports 2,085 jobs and indirectly 2,967 jobs, directly contributing \$375 million to the Tasmanian economy, and indirectly \$589 million.

Various other interest groups including the Glebe Residents Association have also written to me with their concerns about the impact on Tasmanian heritage. Various prior examples of work on the Macquarie Point have been brought to my attention as involving community input for such issues, for example, the *MONA Vision from Macquarie Point* involved substantial community consultation and community buy in.

Meanwhile, in creating the stadium proposal, the government, with its innate hubris, has ignored all previous work, conspiring in secret and utilising a legislative majority to ram it through without any community input. Mr President, I must ask why is this so? What is it frightened of?

As was raised with me by a constituent, the Gehl report, which underpins the Hobart City Council's inner city development plan and approach to future development in Hobart, recommends the following:

Given the extraordinary location of Hobart Railyards, the waterfront should be celebrated by an urban formulated public space relating to its highly urban situation. The buildings at the Hobart Railyards ought to hold a multi-functional mix of use, within the buildings and within the individual quarters.' The site should 'Ensure passive surveillance by placing residences low and in close contact with public space. Build low and dense and avoid tall buildings creating problems at the micro-climatic level.

However, we've had members of this place and the Premier saying, let's just do something with it. We haven't been able to figure out what to do with it, so let's put a stadium on it. Well, if we can't figure out what to do with it, put the stadium somewhere else and let the next generation figure out what to do with it. Let's not just bury it away for the sake of the stadium.

It's unfortunate the predominant planning and development regulation body in Hobart, the Hobart City Council, acknowledges this reality while the government simply ignores and overrides it with the proposal, which is entirely out of context with the vision being implemented by the Hobart City Council.

Notwithstanding the question of the impact of the stadium on heritage and the unsuitability of the site in relation to the cityscape, there are also simply better uses of the land and the money.

In 2017, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation produced its reset masterplan for 2017-2030 based on the MONA vision. As the then-minister for State Growth Peter Gutwein said at the time:

The Macquarie Point redevelopment is ideally positioned to stimulate the broader economy, attract investment, and create jobs.

The corporation then went on to engage in a community-wide consultation with over 250 key stakeholders. I quote from the resulting plan:

... to provide opportunities for input into the reset vision and enhance community ownership and commitment to the reset.' The defining principles for the site that came out of the process are to:

Involve a mix of uses; be people-focused; support inner-city living; be well-connected to the broader Hobart environment; respect the site's history; incorporate principles of sustainability; not prejudice port activities; complement and not compete with activity in the CBD and greater Hobart area; and deliver major socio-economic benefits to Hobart and Tasmania.

These defining principles are fully supported in Federal Group's submission that I spoke of earlier. However, the government has ridden roughshod over this considered approach to impose an enormous, domed roof structure which is to be 54 metres high - 10 to 12 metres higher than the neighbouring Grand Chancellor Hotel.

In a related vein, the environmental impact that this build will have is worrisome. To quote a concerned couple from Sandy Bay:

Then there are the horrific environmental issues attached to the location where the AFL insisted this monument to a sporting code had to be built, and that will add to the overall cost of the project due to the difficulties of first cleaning it up. The toxic sludge on the Macquarie Point site is a significant health hazard as well as a logistical nightmare. Sea level rise will only add to this.

Mr President, Tasmania decries the stadium situation as a disgraceful and miserable idea because neither the numbers nor the business case made by the government makes any sense other than as a despotic attempt to force AFL into the centre of Hobart.

The government has swept damning report after damning report under the carpet. It has used unrealistic expectations to boost the purported profitability of the stadium concept. It fails to recognise issues with the construction and real cost of blowouts. Various damning reports have been submitted to the government, including those by Dr Gruen and Saul Eslake saying much the same thing. Yet, I note that they have not received nearly as much coverage as they should have. There has been an utter failure by the media to appropriately and fairly cover the extensive submissions made against the stadium. The Tasmanian Planning Commission report is an apt example, highlighting practical issues with transport design, funding concerns, heritage, visual and scale impacts, and governmental mismanagement of the stadium.

The Hobart City Council has briefed some members of the Legislative Council. I don't think those qualified professionals and elected members could even believe that the stadium project would have progressed this far. I was under the distinct impression those present did not actually believe that there might be a chance that this uncosted and unwarranted waste of taxpayers' money could still be on the table.

As well as the government slandering these critical reports, it has clearly used fanciful expectations to prop up its business case. For instance, Macquarie Point Stadium -

Leader, I think it will be about 11.20 p.m. before I am finished.

**Ms Rattray** - That's fine, members are happy to keep going.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you.

**Ms Webb** - I am going to have to keep going with mine all through the night, member for Mersey. We are not going to be adjourning for anybody.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Alright, I will try not to put you to sleep.

- to reach capacity, let alone make a profit, will be reliant on unrealistic expectations on interstate travellers and Tasmanians alike. Yes, there will probably be a novelty effect for a year or two, but research shows a natural return to average levels. I note the summary of a research roundup of the value of public funding for a sports stadium by journalist, Clark Merrefield:

Research conducted over decades indicates public investments in sports stadiums almost never lead to massive economic gains for host cities.

Moreover, there are real questions to be raised as to whether the stadium can be built in what will be a rushed timeframe, with severe financial penalties embedded in the Premier's deal. I must question, why would we be paying penalties to an outside organisation if the build which we fund doesn't happen on time?

As I first discussed, there's a real likelihood for a stadium, which is acclaimed as 'the first of its kind in Australia', to suffer an unbudgeted cost blowout. An example of what could be built on a brownfield industrial site for the same sort of money is the new Everton football stadium in England. The Hill Dickinson Stadium opened earlier this year, built at a cost of roughly \$1.6 billion with a capacity of 52,769 people and without a covered roof. Interestingly, Liverpool City Council was to be a loan guarantor for a significant part of the cost, a facility that is now unnecessary as Everton Football Club has arranged all the necessary finance through private means. If only the same was true of this stadium's finances.

There must be a big problem as there have been no commitments made regarding the management of potential budget blowout, or what contingencies may be in place and likely, this will also land as a nasty surprise on the shoulders of the Tasmanian taxpayers. This is especially likely given the government's inability to find willing private co-investors.

I note that the budget has already blown out to \$1.13 billion, and not a red cent more. Who foots the \$200 million increase since the last dollar figure, you may ask? Apparently, Tasmania does, or so the government decided behind closed doors. The government has managed to blow out the cost of the proposal by more than 20 per cent: that's another \$200 million before a shovel has even touched the ground. While the Premier is not even sure whether the legislation will pass, he fails to secure private investment and adds \$200 million to the price tag. Consequently, Tasmania must pay much more than the initial proposal.

I could have said the exact same thing the last three times this project went up in price. What we can be sure of is, exactly like a mediaeval rack as a notorious instrument of torture, the ratcheting clicks of the growing costs will only ever increase the tension of our already overstretched state finances. With the stadium builder in charge of the winch, we will have no chance of relief.

Even irrespective of this recent blowout, how can the Tasmanian people expect this project will stay within the estimated budget? The government has failed to give consideration to so many issues and ignored community and professional concerns. How can one expect any project to stay on budget when it fails to consider and address or mitigate likely social costs, likely financial imposts and lost opportunity costs?

When I first spoke on this matter, I stated the following:

I suggest that the premise for the deal has changed completely with the cost blowout unless the AFL can function as the guarantor for any government costs over the much publicised \$375 million then the stadium cannot be part of the deal. Just as a parent being asked to be the guarantor on a child's mortgage or a business loan. Previously, some of my constituents were in agreement with the AFL team linked with the stadium and made assessment

and judgment on what was initially announced, but surely the game has changed.

Since then, Madam Deputy President, we have a \$200 million increase in price, the state cannot find any private backers, and inevitable cost blowouts are now obviously going to be footed by the bank of mum and dad, and every other Tasmanian. Frankly, the already shaky quasi-positive assessment made by supporters, when the stadium was 20 per cent cheaper, were assuming the existence of a private backer in a public/private partnership. This does not a mandate make and is even more so now as the value proposition becomes increasingly lopsided as the costs inevitably escalate. As such, I urge supporting members to reconsider their support, consider the general anti-stadium sentiment of the majority of Tasmanians, the obvious lack of a mandate or proper process, the lack of planning, and the escalating fiscal crisis that the stadium will just exacerbate.

We've heard from other people about other major infrastructure builds both in Victoria and New South Wales, and Brisbane with the Olympics coming up in 2032. Our role is not going to get cheaper. With these considerations in mind, I put to you that a responsible member of the Legislative Council should not and cannot in good conscience vote for this proposal. As the final check on parliamentary decision-making it is the imperative that those items which have passed the House, no matter who introduces them or what agenda precedes them, must be thoroughly examined.

Having to bypass proper procedure and subvert rule of law to pass a broadly unpopular proposal strays from representative governance and fundamental democratic values. As such, it is even more important that merits of the stadium proposal be rigorously scrutinised. My honourable colleagues, I put to you the following questions in considering the merits of the proposal, as a writer from Kettering put them to me:

- (1) Will the stadium add ongoing quality of life value to the Tasmanian community?
- (2) Is it fair for the whole Tasmanian population - including all regions and those who aren't interested in Australian Rules football?
- (3) Is it economically justified - including consideration of how the money might be spent on other pressing priorities - and that the enormous expense could be avoided by using existing sports venues.

Tasmania is allowing itself to be provided an ultimatum, between a bad deal or no deal at all. Tasmania should not have to choose between its own financial wellbeing and a team. This is frankly insulting and it is laughable that the current government has simply accepted the ultimatum and chosen the worst option of the two.

With the opposition Labor Party capitulating to the will of the government by supporting the proposal, despite its mixed messages and prior commitments to act as a functional opposition, one must question whether this legislation is receiving the level of parliamentary oversight it clearly desperately requires. *Pulse Tasmania* quotes the honourable Mr Rockliff as saying that, 'every MP will get a vote on whether the stadium will go ahead. Yes or No. If the vote is no, it is all over'. How can the honourable Premier say that, knowing full well that at

least now in the lower House, members of the government, supported by the opposition, will vote on party lines?

The first time I spoke on this matter, I put it to you that Tasmanians 'are not supportive of an AFL team if it comes at a cost of the Tasmanian economy', and that this 'is a direct affront to what is expected of responsible government. The government, through its failure to recognise the demands of the Tasmanian people, has placed itself in an untenable position'.

It is my view that this point stands stronger now more than ever with increased spending, an ever-dwindling base of public support and the lack of a mandate, or a viable business case that does not rely on millions of dollars of public subsidies. It's not in dispute that Tasmanians want a team - they clearly do - but what they clearly do not want is the cost of the stadium deal that will run the risk of bankrupting us.

In my view, this proposal has already divided Tasmania while undermining what little remaining confidence rural Tasmanians had in their representatives. Instead of addressing the desperate shortage of affordable housing, crumbling hospitals, lower socioeconomic rates and mobility within rural Tasmania, the government spends a billion dollars on the stadium. All the while, the government continues to complain about budget deficits, excessive spending and proposes privatisation of public services and public infrastructure necessary for rural and regional Tasmanians. The major parties are neutering their own representatives in rural and regional Tasmania, forcing them to vote against their own interests and those of their electorates. This will not serve the state well, nor is it in a form representative of the people.

The tactics the government has used to achieve this goal are appalling, undercutting democratic procedure and debasing due process. Meanwhile, the government relies on conjecture to underpin its florid rhetoric.

Labor has an obvious exit strategy and a possible political win in this situation. Rather than backflipping, they have the opportunity to present a refined position based on the evolving circumstances of the proposal. A well-thought-out investment in facilities for AFL is not inherently a bad idea and would likely find the support of the majority of the state. As the primary opposition, the Labor Party should side with the majority of its constituents to present a logical and more strategic policy approach. Instead, there's total capitulation and a failure to even acknowledge the concerns of those they represent.

Regardless of individual members' feelings about the Macquarie Point Stadium, I have many times heard in this place that proper process needs to be and should be supported by parliament. What is occurring now is not proper process. It does not pass the pub test. No matter how much media spin and tinsel the government wraps around this enabling legislation, it is not acceptable. This enabling legislation should not proceed just because the government says so.

We know there are swathes of issues and problems with the stadium proposal. The government has out-of-hand dismissed various alternative stadium plans and locations that would have seen better outcomes, private investment, and a far lower risk factor. It's almost as if the government as a whole has stamped its foot and declared, 'Daddy, we want another stadium and it must be at Macquarie Point.' Perhaps it's still not too late. Mr Willie can bring a healthy dose of reality to the Premier's position and temper the AFL's expectations by allowing his members in this place to vote.

Should the proposal go ahead, it's a wicked and complex problem where once started it cannot be unscrambled. Each relatively minor issue that is not addressed now - for example, parking, city planning, impact on heritage and the Hobart skyline - will cost tenfold to rectify once the build is complete or even underway. Simply put, mismanagement of public funds, the lack of public support, the lack of transparency, and the opportunity cost are fundamental issues which undermine the integrity of the project.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Madam Deputy President, I draw your attention to the state of the House. We don't have a quorum, do we?

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - Yes, we do.

**Ms Lovell** - I think we're okay.

**Ms O'Connor** - You were hiding there. Sorry, you're short. Sorry about that. It looked pretty thin here.

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - Continue, member.

**Ms O'Connor** - I do apologise, Mr Gaffney.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I thought you meant they were all asleep.

Dr James also made the following comment to that concern:

... finally, if you feel that you must vote with your heart as well as your head, then I would urge you to feel some empathy for those who will undoubtedly be hurt by the \$1 billion worth of professional football stadium-related public spending.

Every day, Tasmanians are already suffering and struggling due to current underfunding in sectors including health, housing and education - and the cuts (or the tightening of the belt) that will inevitably follow massive stadium spending will only harm many more.

When we toured the new bridge at Bridgewater, one of the things we're all impressed with was that they talked about how many years had led to having it all mapped out. I believe they said 2013 was their first look at it, and then they went back in 2015 and 2017. They had it all properly planned. Haste makes waste. In this situation, we have to have it built by a certain date and time, and that worries me.

I would like to illustrate to those listening what Dr James means by people suffering. No, I won't, although I will go to here. There are two or three examples of health-related issues where the system is failing from a financial - we know about that, but I'm just putting that on the table, because there's some particularly good comments by paramedic staff. However, I realise the time.

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - The 90 minutes was up half-an-hour ago.

**Ms Webb** - That's absolutely fine. He can take as long as he likes.

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - He said he was speaking for 90 minutes, and I'm just reminding him of that fact.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I think these are everyday examples of underfunding in sectors including health, housing and education, of which Dr James was referring. Whilst none of these issues may appear to be relevant to those who insist on allocating a huge amount of public debt on a third AFL stadium, to those people such economic redistribution very much defines and impacts their lives and the opportunities within them, but we hear from the Treasurer that there will be no negative impact or financial impost. I always thought that governments need to look after the real needs of their people first, before wasting money on the wants of the AFL, which at the end of the day is a mainland multibillion-dollar corporate entity. Think of the things Tasmanian communities could use that money for supporting grassroots sports, housing, education, healthcare, health literacy for years to come. Instead, we squander it on risky and poorly thought-out proposals which a number of Tasmanians do not want.

I will end my speech with a final damning statement, which is quite long, put to me by a constituent:

How does the average Tasmanian - someone who is not against a football team, or measured & considered progress - have their voice heard in this situation? I demand more from people who are meant to serve the majority of this state's population, not the too-loud minority.

That the government has allowed Tasmania to enter such a poor deal as this in the first place, and that it has remained staunchly in support of the deal above all other considerations, is appalling. It is a bad deal perpetuated by even worse advice and should be reconsidered.

If the government and opposition refuse to alter course, I'd like to remind them of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a salutary ballad that echoes so much of the stadium debate.

The government's insistence in forcing the state to bypass statutory planning procedures, as well as ignoring damning assessments such as the Eslake, Gruen and TPC reports is alarming. Meanwhile, the changing stance and capitulation of the primary opposition party has becalmed it completely in the eyes of the electorate.

The Premier is a decent man at heart, but it appears that he has near-terminal case of 'stadium disease' - one that has now taken him into a second minority government as he wriggles and squirms to find new ways to bypass agreed pathways and due process.

I will continue to oppose the stadium in its current form and where it's built. Ideally, I would like to see the stadium proposal substantially reconsidered, and Macquarie Point scrapped entirely. There are at least two alternative, and far safer, options out there that can be reconsidered if this one fails. I hope that the Legislative Council will fulfil its role as a check on irresponsible and poorly thought-out lawmaking.

I did attend the fantastic, unfortunately wet, rally on Sunday, and it was an amazing turnout with wonderful speakers and great support from the community. The AFL cannot dismiss the passion reaffirming that Tasmania deserves an AFL team. I believe that 80 per cent of the state, possibly even more, support a Tasmanian team but, unfortunately, not at any cost

and not with a new stadium at Macquarie Point. It was a great turnout on Sunday. The organisers would be very pleased and the speakers were varied and great.

In a nutshell, first, most Tasmanians want the best for the current, next and future generations including jobs, health, happiness, housing, sporting success, arts, culture, lifestyle, safety, security. Second, most Tasmanians are ferociously supportive of our own AFL and AFLW teams. Third, many would support the building of a new stadium somewhere in Hobart - although to be honest, most from my electorate would prefer Launceston to be the home of football and Hobart to be the home of cricket and basketball. Finally, many people, including the Tasmanian Planning Commission, the Hobart City Council, the RSL, Heritage Tasmania, the Aboriginal community, economists, architects and thousands of Tasmanians, are ferociously opposed to a new roofed stadium at Macquarie Point.

I really enjoyed the optimism of the young lady who spoke with us, saying that our Tasmanians will move on once it's built. We know that Tasmanians, many Tasmanians, are annoyed with what's happening.

I've heard the Premier say on numerous occasions there is no plan B. I realise, as you do, that he is reinforcing that the AFL made it clear that without a new stadium at the centre of our city there will be no AFL teams. I must admit that ultimatum grates on me a bit, but it's what our Premier, the government and the opposition have agreed to, apparently regardless of the case.

However, that's not the plan B that I am referring to. Plan B will be needed when the vote is taken in this very Chamber tomorrow and people across the state realise what that means. The result is the same whether the stadium continues or whether it does not.

On one side, there will be Tasmanians incredibly pleased with the outcome of the decision. On the other hand, there will be many individuals hurt, upset and even angry. Indeed, a very knowledgeable business economist friend of mine said, 'How can you give conditional support for safeguards that only happen in the future?' When we sit here and say that we're going to have these safeguards for the future, that's not going to occur.

How will the Premier and his media manage the wide range of emotions experienced across Tasmania on Friday? How will the very pro-stadium media send a message to all those Tasmanians who are out there annoyed and cringing? Leadership is not about looking after those who are in the tent. Leadership is about tending to those Tasmanians who are outside and trying to get them to come back into the camping ground. There must be a plan B, Premier, otherwise this healing will not happen. I am sure the AFLW and AFL teams are already considering how they can reach out to those people if this goes ahead.

In closing, I was talking to a Yes Team, Yes Stadium person. We were texting at 3.30 a.m. this morning, having a very respectful conversation about the position we were in. I wrote:

You can sense I'm frustrated that it has come to this, and I am hugely disappointed with the process that least Tasmanians with a divided community supporting our own AFL team which could have and should have galvanised and brought the community together like the JackJumpers, but nothing could be further from the truth.

I will not and I cannot support the order.

[11.12 p.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Madam Deputy President, I rise to speak on the order today. I'm going to indicate to members that I have a lengthy contribution, probably significantly lengthier than the member for Mersey's. I'm noting that we're here at this time and I will begin.

I apologise to the staff for potential inconvenience, but I don't apologise for wishing to take this time to be accountable to my community, to the Tasmanians who've interacted with me on this issue over years, to the hard work and thorough comprehensive work of many, many professionals on this topic over years, and for the fact that we're making an incredibly consequential decision here on this matter. On the basis of all those things, I will be making my full contribution and if I need to do that because the House refuses to adjourn for me tonight, we will do it but, at a certain point, out of courtesy to the staff, I'm likely to move for an adjournment. I'm flagging that now.

I rise today to speak on the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025, and I do so with a heavy heart. We should never have been put in a situation we find ourselves in today. Our state was signed up to a legal agreement in secret by a Premier who allowed our dream of a cherished AFL team to become manacled to an ill-conceived, prohibitively expensive, highly inappropriate stadium in an unsuitable, damaging location.

After promising in this parliament in 2022 that the team would not be contingent on a stadium, the Premier broke that promise with his clandestine signing of a contract that had not been approved by Cabinet, had not been advised on by Treasury, had not been scrutinised by parliament, and had not been consulted on with the Tasmanian people. This was an act of betrayal to the Tasmanian people. It was an act that signalled a dissent into a tainted decision-making that would become the hallmark of this whole sorry saga. Not only did the Premier betray Tasmanians that day by setting them up for what he went on to incite to be the most divisive issue this state has ever experienced, he also confirmed his abandonment of integrity in leadership and good governance and the relegation of public interest to an inconvenience that can be discarded as required for political advantage.

To say 'yes' to this stadium project is not just to endorse an infrastructure project. To say 'yes' is to endorse as acceptable a dereliction of good governance, to endorse reckless political decision-making not based on evidence and public interest but on populism, propaganda and threats.

History will not reflect kindly on the actions of the Premier on this matter. The tone of debate from the Premier and his government has been one of populist aggression with name-calling, disparagement of independent experts, a willingness to mislead the public, and what amounts to political threats and bullying.

With his singular failure of principled leadership, the Premier has put us between a rock and a hard place, no doubt about it. Whichever way the vote went today, the only guaranteed outcome is that a great many Tasmanians will be exceedingly hurt and angry. This is the Premier's legacy: a divided and harmed Tasmanian community, and it didn't have to be this way.

I understand that many people have a religious fervour for AFL football and are enormously excited that we have finally achieved our dream of a Tassie team, which makes it all the more distasteful that some Tasmanians with that genuine depth of feeling for a team have been cruelly whipped up into a frenzy of zealotry for the stadium by the Premier and the media based on mistruths, propaganda and false equivalences. This whole process has been a masterclass, quite frankly, in political and corporate manipulation of well-meaning and hopeful citizens.

With great sadness, it has also been impossible to ignore the level of antipathy which has been inflamed and rewarded by political leaders, particularly the Premier, by the populist, aggressive tone of public commentary. What a shocking place we find ourselves in.

That we have reached this point tells us a great deal about the utter failure of political leadership and failure of integrity in decision-making by the Premier and his government - which prompts us to ask ourselves: what could this have looked like? What should have happened?

In regard to a Tassie AFL team, as originally mapped out, we should have been granted a licence without the initial requirement of a specific stadium at a specific site, but with the intention that we would plan for a stadium after the team had the opportunity to become established and we could have a community conversation. If that had occurred, we would have established the Devils team as the most incredibly exciting and unifying opportunity for the Tasmanian community in generations. We could then have had a respectful and positive conversation as a community about a future stadium without the pressure of a particular timeframe and without the dictate of the AFL on location.

That's what should have happened, and our state would have been elevated and unified by it. Not only that, our state would also have retained its bodily and political autonomy instead of being dictated to and violated by a powerful mainland corporate interest. This is our state; it should have been our choice.

Let's talk about that choice because, on the facts of it, it is a very straightforward one. The facts of the matter are: this project has been assessed via a planning system, and the expert independent assessment has provided a categorical conclusion and a recommendation to us as the final decision-makers. It's this:

The Panel recommends that the project should not proceed.

The IAR identifies a number of benefits and disbenefits that would accrue if the Project proceeds.

The Panel has concluded that the benefits are outweighed by the disbenefits.

That's it. That's the Tasmanian Planning Commission independent expert panel in its recommendation report, which then sets out the principal negative impacts as to why they came to that conclusion that the project should not proceed.

First they speak to economic reasons. This is in their recommendation report on page 3:

A cost-benefit analysis has been used to comprehensively assess all benefits and costs, apply monetary values to each of the significant items, and considers the impact of variability in these monetary values on the assessed net social benefit or cost of the Project.

The assessment includes or considers all costs of constructing and operating the stadium, and all economic, social and cultural benefits and costs over the period of the construction, and the Proponent's assumed economic operating life of 30 years.

And further:

The Panel has found the ratio of benefits to costs is less than 0.5.

And again later:

The Panel's cost benefit analysis shows that the construction and operation of the stadium results in a substantial net social cost to the Tasmanian community. The reason for this is that the economic and social benefits are small compared to the public cost of the stadium.

The second reason they speak to in their recommendation report is around urban form, activation and public realm reasons. It's on pages 5 to 6 of that report and it says:

Significantly, the Panel considers that the form and scale of the stadium represent a repudiation of a number of long-standing planning principles and strategies that have been applied to developments in Sullivans Cove, or controlled through the planning scheme.

And further:

The stadium (including its roof) - through its size, scale and form - will be dominant within the landscape, diminishing the prominence and significance of the Domain headland as a frame of Sullivans Cove, and standing as a significant obtrusive element in the present urban form in and surrounding Sullivans Cove. It will irrevocably change, for the worse in the opinion of the Panel, the way in which the landscape and urban pattern is appreciated and understood.

....

... The size, shape and location of the site is ill-suited to a building like the stadium - a singular, large, bulky monolith which will overwhelm those surrounding buildings and the setting.

In addition, the nature of the stadium design and what is necessary for the Project, and the physical constraints of the site, are such that it is unlikely that there will be scope for general activation of those areas of the site which are not consumed by the stadium. They are relatively small, unlikely to

support viable ongoing retail businesses and will be unattractive to visit other than to access stadium events.

The third area they go to in the recommendation report on pages 6 to 7 is around reasons of cultural heritage and community values -

The IAR identifies that the Project - but essentially the stadium - will have very significant adverse impacts on a number of places, the most significant being the Cenotaph, the Royal Engineers Building and the buildings along Hunter Street.

...

The Panel has concluded that the adverse effects are unacceptable. The Project will not be a 'fair' development in that it (principally parts and features of the stadium) will extensively and irreparably damage the historic cultural heritage of the heritage listed buildings in Hunter Street and the Engineers building, and most particularly, the Cenotaph. It will also adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole, and the experience of it. The Panel does not consider that the stadium building will be iconic as claimed by the Proponent.

The Panel considers that Sullivans Cove has a prevailing 19th century historical character which is highly valued and valuable. This is a large part of its charm and attractiveness, for locals and visitors alike. It is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity, and an important part of the brand. Tasmania. Those things will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts.

These three fundamental areas of negative impact - economic; urban form, activation and public realm; and cultural heritage and community values - cannot be ameliorated by permit conditions. Nothing can fix them. Their impacts, as the panel says, are irrevocable. In the conclusion in the recommendation report, the TPC panel says this:

The fundamental problem is the size, location and geographical features of the site, in its highly valued context, do not support the disproportionately large, monolithic building proposed. It is a building which is incongruent with the valued characteristics of its spatial context, completely at odds with the long-established planning principles guiding and informing development, and with the land and urban fabric surrounding the site and the heritage values associated with nearby places.

It goes on to say, Madam Deputy President:

Proceeding with the Project will give rise to irrevocable and unacceptable adverse impacts on Hobart's spatial and landscape character, urban form and historic cultural heritage.

In addition, the Project represents a significant net cost and will diminish the economic welfare of Tasmanians as a whole, and it offers almost no scope

for the site to become a vibrant active place that is attractive to visit outside of major event mode.

In very simple terms, the stadium is far too big for the site and the benefits it will bring are significantly outweighed by the disbenefits it creates.

End of quote.

Given the clarity of that recommendation and its further detailed extrapolation in the panel's Integrated Assessment Report, the members of this Chamber were left to decide whether they accept that expert recommendation, whether they agree with the independent, eminently qualified panel members' conclusions.

The way I see it, based on that categorical conclusion from the TPC panel, there were two possible outcomes from this debate. One of them would cause guaranteed, irrevocable and an absolute end, and the other would provide myriad opportunities to pursue beneficial outcomes that we can all agree on.

If the order is voted down, in my view, nothing is permanently lost. There would remain possible pathways forward for all the claimed positive outcomes of the proposed stadium project. There are other stadium options that haven't yet been fully considered and even on cursory assessment would have far fewer of the economic and heritage issues of this Mac Point stadium proposed.

The future of the Devils team is a decision for the AFL and the Premier and, of course, much as bull-headed statements are made, it is fully within their power to continue the team under a renegotiated arrangement should they choose to do so. That option exists. I know that all members of parliament would certainly stand with the Premier to fight for our Devils through renegotiation.

We could generate greater economic benefit and jobs by the government instead investing the \$1 billion to \$2 billion in other projects, others that have been appropriately prioritised, costed and planned. Virtually any other public infrastructure project would have a better benefit-to-cost ratio than this stadium.

A no vote, would have left us with options galore. However, contrast the other outcome, the one that we now can see is likely the one it will be. If this order goes through, the unique, cherished and highly valuable heritage waterfront precinct - the face of our capital city - will be permanently, irretrievably ruined. This is utterly the wrong way to irrevocably change the face of a capital city - the essence that makes it unique and cherished - the essence that draws visitors and sits at the centre of our valued brand.

Experts have said categorically that this stadium will permanently ruin the heritage character of our waterfront. This area is something for which we could readily be seeking World Heritage status. In fact, I know the City of Hobart is exploring that. It is the picture postcard view of our city that tourists love. It is a specific drawcard to our capital city because it isn't found anywhere else in the country.

Compounding the ruin of our heritage waterfront, this project would also irrevocably ruin the 100 years of protection for the respectfully and reverently planned Cenotaph precinct as a

sacred area of remembrance. It would be a travesty to cast aside these fundamental, historic and precious aspects of our state's capital city through this case study of tainted governance, of corporate blackmail, of propaganda-driven populism, and which lacks the support of a majority of Tasmanians.

I will reflect on the planning process put in place for this project. In doing that, at the outset, we must acknowledge and thank former members, Lara Alexander and John Tucker. They were vilified and turned on during their time here and when they pushed through with this, but it is because of Mr Tucker and Mrs Alexander's principled stand that we are here.

Now, for the communities we each represent, we have the opportunity to be publicly scrutinising something that has such far-reaching ramifications for us all. They lobbied to ensure that should the stadium be declared a Project of State Significance, then any eventual order deriving from the assessment process must pass both Houses of parliament, which was not a requirement previously in all its circumstances.

The State Policies and Projects Amendment Bill 2023 amended the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* to require that a project of state significance that has been proposed by the state government needs to be approved by both Houses of parliament before any final approval order that would become effective. The bill passed both Houses of parliament and became an act on 31 August 2023. That is what I call a legacy to be proud of, for those two MPs. When members use their time here in the public interest to strengthen the democratic tools available for future MPs, by which they can use to protect the democratic rights of current and future Tasmanians, that is a democratic legacy to be proud of.

While some of us may be feeling that having to participate in this debate is one of the more stressful and difficult things that we have had to do, it is our privilege and our responsibility to do so, on behalf of those we represent who don't have such a platform by which their voices can be heard. We must be that for them.

While I stand by my public position that the parliament should not be used as a de facto planning entity, I recognise that in this instance, where that is the unfortunate case, then it is only right and proper that all elected representatives are given the opportunity to place clearly on the public record how and why they will be voting the way they do. So, thank you to former members, Lara Alexander and John Tucker.

With that as the background, last year the parliament voted for the stadium project to be assessed under the project of state significance process. The TPC was instructed to undertake its assessment of the stadium project, which led to 12 months of work by an independent expert panel appointed for the task.

First, because the POSS process sets aside the usual planning legislation and rules, a set of guidelines was developed against which an integrated assessment would be made. These guidelines were drafted, publicly consulted and finalised. The proponent provided the required project material and information for an initial assessment to be made and a draft integrated assessment report was produced. That draft IAR was put out for consultation and response. Three weeks of public hearings were then conducted by the panel in July of this year, where the government's arguments and that of other stakeholders and experts were tested publicly and transparently. Countless thousands of pages of evidence provided into this process are still

available publicly and ensure that there is absolute accountability around the assessment made by the panel and upon which they provided their recommendation not to proceed.

The TPC report represents an exhaustive and authoritative assessment of the stadium and, quite frankly, it deserves nothing less than an honest and genuine response. However, the government's response document and the minister's statement of reasons are not the equivalent of an honest and genuine response to the TPC's IAR.

Section 26(7) of the *State Policies and Projects Act* does not prescribe that a minister who chooses to act contrary to the TPC recommendation must respond to the TPC's report or how; but the government has, I believe, a responsibility to properly respond, if for no other reason than to properly inform this parliament, including this Chamber, of its appropriate response to such a significant piece of work provided as advice.

The government had a responsibility to the parliament to provide an accurate, rigorous and comprehensive response to the TPC's integrated assessment report and recommendation report and that response should have identified each issue and finding, and perhaps counter arguments to it, if the government had them. It should have identified gaps if key matters were not reported on in the government's view, and it should have identified if the TPC had failed to deal fairly with evidence or witnesses put forward by the proponent.

But the government, of course, did nothing of the sort. Instead, it produced a glossy brochure called the *Macquarie Point Stadium Government Response* and there is simply no way that that could be regarded as a response at all. It has been noted to us that the government response report critically makes almost no specific mention of the TPC findings or recommendations. The bulk of the report totally ignores the TPC report. It is just, in main, a long list of every possible positive thing that they could say about the stadium. There's no evidence, though, that backs up most of those claims. It's just spin. There's not hard data in the government's response to back up the claims it makes, nor to refute the fundamental flaws identified as prohibitive of the project proceeding by the TPC panel.

As one person put it to me in an email about the government's very poor response, and I quote:

The TPC's Final Integrated Assessment Report (FIAR) concluded, upon consideration of all costs and benefits, that the disbenefits outweigh the benefits.

Yet the Government's meagre response has simply played up the benefits, particularly those that are conveniently unquantifiable, and used 'intangibles' to dismiss the quantifiable disbenefits as if they simply don't exist.

It then mixed all the benefits together in a publicity blurb that ignores or dismisses the TPC's year-long considerations and expertise completely.

This is NOT a proper response to a planning document.

Things are not made manifest, or spring fully formed from a few words on the pages of a glossy brochure.

Is this a standard you are willing to accept?

That's a damn good question for all of us here. My answer to that question is no. It is not the standard that I am willing to accept. But this government constantly disappoints and now, given the way that this outcome is going today on this order, I think that they have trained us all very well to fall into line and to accept such an abysmally low standard. It is one of the most unedifying and disrespectful things I think that we have seen in this whole affair, in terms of a government response, that being the disparagement of highly-qualified professionals. This seems to be becoming a habit for this government and particularly this Premier. It is political expediency and the very opposite of leadership. The Premier is actually sailing into Trumpian territory, I believe, and that is utterly unacceptable.

Let's be really clear: disparaging professionals for doing a job that your government has engaged them to do is the height of disrespect and oafishness. The TPC panel members are eminently qualified and experienced people, and one only has to take the time to look at the transcript of the hearing that members had with the TPC panel members just last week. At the beginning of that hearing for our benefit, they reintroduced themselves to us and described their professional expertise and the experience they had across the range of fields that they worked in.

I point people to that transcript, I believe it's pages 3 to 6 of the transcript where they're introducing themselves and providing that information about their professional expertise and qualifications. When anybody looks to that and hears those panel members describe what they brought to the table to make their integrated assessment of this project, anyone who then thought to turn around and disparage their capacity, to say unedifying, disrespectful things about their performance should be egregiously ashamed of themselves. This links to the government's notion of matters of opinion and choice, which is an expression that we've seen them use. It's in their government response in the foreword on page 3, and it's deeply disrespectful. This is what it says there in that government document:

The Tasmanian Planning Commission agrees that we can build this stadium at this site. It also found that we can manage pedestrian and vehicle traffic, we can manage the noise, and we can evacuate people safely. In the Government's view, what is left are matters of opinion and choice.

That's a shocking verballing of the panel in the first place. I refer to the quotes I provided earlier in my remarks about their actual findings; but I believe it's also highly disrespectful to dismiss what the panel assessed and stated in detail throughout the integrated assessment report as being merely matters of opinion and choice.

In the hearing that we had with the panel members last week, we tested that claim, that statement from the government in their response document. Here's some of the things that the panel members had to say in response to that. First, on page 8 of the transcript from Mr Turner, he said this:

It's ultimately a matter of looking carefully at the evidence. In that regard, we think that we have considered and properly analysed the factual material as opposed to things which might be considered to be beyond that.

We were always concerned with empirical evidence. We were always interrogating ourselves about, 'What's the evidence for the proposition that's being advanced?' We consider, perhaps - I won't say immodestly, I think - that we have sifted through the materials, we have considered the facts; we have - using our respective areas of expertise and experience - analysed those things, and we have reached the conclusions, which could be said to be opinions, but they are ones which are valid and which have weight as opposed to the expression of a view which is not supported by empirical evidence.

Adding to that, Ms Penn, a panel member, went on to say this:

... I think Mr Turner has already talked about the evidence-based assessment that we undertook and that is absolutely the case. I hope our credentials stand for themselves in terms of our integrity and our independence and our standing, which is to do with providing honest advice based on the evidence. It's also to do with substantial experience in assessing these things.

Something I do is assess the quality of urban places and of infrastructure. That's not about numbers - two plus two equals four - it can be harder to assess. People sometimes think that's about opinion or subjectivity. It's not. There's a difference between taste and quality - if you don't mind me just talking about that - taste is 'I like this, you like that'. Some people like the Georgian sandstone of Salamanca and some people like Mona. They're both good - for different reasons - they've both got issues, but they're both good. Style, taste are always subjective and they're always valid. Someone likes pink, someone likes red, no problem.

Quality is about the combination of a whole range of factors: how well something works, is it fit for purpose, is it sustainable, enduring, can it be maintained, is it on budget, all those sorts of things that are part of project assessment; also, is it amenable, is it somewhere that people want to go - amenable, being comfortable - is it windy or is there access to sun and light. Is it comprehensively designed in a way that contributes to its place - so that it responds to its landscape, it's a good place to be, it's something that people will value, et cetera. They're all things that can be measured or judged. So they are objective. They are not subjective. I will defend that for every day of the week.

Despicably, the TPC panel members were accused of bias by some on the pro-stadium side of the argument. It is utterly unacceptable to impugn the professionalism and reputation of these individuals who were appointed as independent experts, based on their experience and their extensive expertise. The panel has been entirely transparent about their work. All evidence taken by them is in the public domain. They've explained their work to us on the public record in the hearing.

As a demonstration of the attitude they brought to this, and as a demonstration of their professionalism, I looked to the transcript which has some summing up comments from the panel members. That's on pages 67 to 69 of that transcript, and I'm going to read a couple of them. It's to demonstrate their exceptional professional approach. First, panel member Mr Wallace said:

And maybe not directly addressing the question, but look, we came into this process without any preconceived ideas. What we've done is, we've tried to be as objective as possible dealing with the facts and not the emotion. We can't deal with the emotion. I, for one, want a team.

We've looked at everything. We've done it rigorously. We've taken a consistent approach on various things and we've formed a view and made a recommendation, to the best of our ability, on the facts that we have, and virtually all those facts came from the proponent.

Ms Penn said:

I absolutely reiterate that point. Certainly, no expression on the political aspects. I also think Tassie should have a team; it probably should have had the first team. But, I just wanted to make a comment that it is a legacy decision. I encourage the committee - and I'm sure you're more aware than I am, because you're making those decisions all the time - but it's a legacy that will, in economic terms, you will manage, government manages those decisions all the time, good or bad, whatever decision you make.

In terms of the built environment outcome and the spatial impact on the Cove and the identity and image and memory and understanding of what Hobart is as a place, and how it feels and how we experience it, my view is that there is a significant legacy impact that I urge you to consider.

Mr Prattley, who is also a panel member, at the hearing, said:

The only additional thing that I don't think we discussed at any length is what's happening to construction costs. Certainly, in Sydney, apartment developments around transit-oriented development sites are being approved and not being started. They cannot afford to build apartments at a price that people can afford to buy them. So, construction costs have got massive. I think during the course of our hearing there was a case of a development of a car sale site up on Macquarie Street for luxury apartments, which are approved that the developer walked away from, citing the 300 per cent increase in construction costs.

Ms Mason, also a panel member, said this:

Yes. Following up from Mr Prattley, you're making a 30- to 50-year decision here. I don't envy you at all because the unfortunate juxtaposition of a team as opposed to a stadium with a roof right here, is an absolutely invidious choice to have to make.

I thought it's important for us to have heard from the panel members and put on the record here some of their statements from the many conversations we had with them at that hearing. In the face of quite disgraceful impugning of their professionalism, and suggestions of bias, and suggestions that they didn't have the capacity to do their work, I think we need to try to create a record that hasn't been created by the government, that hasn't been created by the media here - create a public record of their exceptional work, their exceptional professionalism, and

the enormous tasks that they undertook, and the very clear advice that they provided to us, which was that we should not proceed with this project because of the highly irrevocable and detrimental influence it will have on our capital city.

The Premier has frequently trotted out the line that this project is the most scrutinised in our state's history and how fully scrutinised it has been. Quite frankly, that may well be true - but for that to be a meaningful statement in any way, we have to remind ourselves of the purpose of scrutiny of public decision-making. Primarily, it is to provide accountability to decision-making so that there can be transparency around how decisions are being made and an opportunity to judge to what extent it serves the public interest.

The most significant scrutiny of this project was the POSS process itself, which was exhaustive and genuinely independent, expert, and arm's-length. That scrutiny delivered a categorical recommendation that the project not proceed. The quantum or depth of scrutiny on any project is meaningless to refer to as a virtue if you, irresponsibly, ignore the most consequential scrutiny, which delivered a damning judgment that, for convenience, you're prepared to discard immediately. It is exactly this kind of flippant sloganeering that makes Tasmanians despair at the deterioration of integrity in our governance and our democracy, and that effort is led by this Premier.

In fact, this slogan of being fully scrutinised is not actually the case. Not everything has been scrutinised. For example, the TPC expert panel did not scrutinise the order before us or the conditions it contains. How could they? They didn't have this final version. We went to the independent planning umpire and asked for their expert evidence-based assessment and recommendation. We received that and, instead of respecting the umpire's decision, we now have this order containing details and conditions that have not been put through the planning expertise scrutiny examination. That is irresponsible on so many levels. To ignore and flout the independent umpire is reckless. It's irresponsible, and no matter how many sweeteners you have swallowed to enable you to do so, it's distasteful.

Additionally, the TPC has not been provided the courtesy of examining new commitments that we've had dropped on us even here today. We are still left with a mountain of serious unresolved matters. Too many questions unanswered.

A message was shared with me recently from a community member and it said this. I'm going to quote it:

I write as a retired town planner and one-time expert member of RMPAT (now TASCAT) and an ex-planning commissioner.

I understand what is involved in decision-making on multifaceted and often complex development applications and I don't envy you the politics that has become part of this one!

I remind you though - ..., after all the politics and passion that has been attributed to the stadium, in the end, it is a decision on a building and its use and whether it is appropriate where it is being suggested. We have specific planning legislation enacted deliberately to provide a well regulated, thorough and professional assessment process. The Stadium was designated a Project of State Significance and a very well credentialed panel of

5 members was set up to assess it. They followed all correct procedures, read and listened to submissions and gave their very considered opinion - to reject the Stadium on many grounds - economic, social, environmental and heritage.

To not accept the Planning Commission Panel's advice is to make a decision on pure politics and populism.

The State government has done exactly that and in doing so, has tarnished the integrity and trust in its own planning system.

It would be further diminished should the Legislative Council follow suit and ignore all the expert advice and approve this ill considered project.

I would add one final reminder.

There was an endorsed and approved Master Plan for the Macquarie Point site, well underway, with Stage 1 (involving an apartment development) about to go for tender, before it was all thrown aside in favour of this Stadium.

It was not a useless undeveloped site with nothing happening on it.

There was another view that I was made aware of along some similar lines. The gist of it was, that the government's decision to disregard and disparage their own Planning Commission in favour of partisan assertions that, would make Chemist Warehouse ads for their latest anti-ageing cream sound believable says it all about this project. Further, they noted that the last time they had observed this sort of behaviour in this state was during the Gunns Pulp Mill saga. Like many others I've heard from, this person also noted the precedent that this will set for future decision-making around major state expenditure for the benefit of vested interests, and they rightly identified that as 'chilling'.

It is chilling, and here is what I thought was a very, very apt quote shared with me. It's this:

At the moment, the progress of the game is being decided by the players, their coaches and sponsors. There's a reason we have umpires.

There is indeed a reason. We are just far past the point of recognising their role in this circumstance.

**And the Council having continued to sit after midnight -**

**THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER 2025**

**Ms WEBB** - I'm going to go to the first of the TPC panel's reasons for recommending against this project: the economics of it. Predictably, we've seen boosterism catch cries of, 'We can't afford not to do it', and 'It will save our state', which is patently ridiculous, quite frankly, but has sadly been swallowed as spin by a huge number of regular Tasmanians who are hopeful and passionate about the team. This is classic cargo cult mentality and, quite frankly, in this

state we have been there, done that and bought the T-shirt before, only to have it all prove a furphy.

This stadium is the latest in a line of messianic projects proposed in this state that are apparently going to save us, solve all our problems, and put our state on the map. Time after time, this has proven not to be true. Our history is littered with the detritus of failed external financial saviours who have rarely delivered. Cargo cult big business external saviours are usually, and fatally, inflated by hubris, but eventually crash like Icarus. It's always the ordinary Tasmanians who have to pick up the pieces; the state has always borne the cost.

This stadium folly is driven by, and inflated with, a similar hubris. It has all the hallmarks of a colonial cargo cult mentality yet again in our state. Apparently, the AFL is doing us all a huge favour for which we should fawn over them and be so grateful for. So grateful that they have cherry picked from our clearly incompetent and unworthy hands our most prime piece of valuable riverfront land at the beating heart of our city home, at the base of our proud Kunanyi/Mount Wellington and on the banks of our Timtumili Minanya/River Derwent. So grateful we should be that they will allow us to sink millions, if not billions, to be able to join their club by having a team which, as historic AFL supporters, Tasmania should always have been. Quite frankly, we should have been treated with respect, courtesy and honour as any equals seeking a common goal should be treated.

In the past, there are plenty of examples of this state rejecting inappropriate cargo cult propositions. Lo and behold, we still found our way forward and we still found plenty of other development opportunities for our state. In fact, Tasmanians are incredibly creative and entrepreneurial. We have a plethora of businesses and projects and events and experiences all over this state that are of, and by, and about Tasmania. They are the living, breathing expressions of our Tasmanian brand. The quiet pursuit of the extraordinary. We've spent millions as a state over years through Brand Tasmania exploring, identifying, describing and honing the brand of this unique state. We have even literally distilled it into a scent.

Brand Tasmania says that its mission is to inspire and encourage Tasmanians, and those who want to be Tasmanian, to quietly pursue the extraordinary. That is the literal antithesis of a cargo cult mentality. Cargo cult projects are what governments cling to when they've failed on the basics. When governments have presided over a downward spiral for our state, with debt growing and outcomes plummeting, cargo cult projects are flung up by government to distract us from their own failures. We have survived without cargo projects in the past. I'm thinking of examples like the Franklin Dam and the pulp mill, which didn't have to come to fruition. We do not need this stadium to save us, and all credible assessment says that, in fact, it will do the opposite.

Having said that I do understand the concern and the assertion that our state is closed for business. There's some truth to that, but that doesn't mean we should accept a project if it's not a good one and if it's not the right one. In this case, that has proven to be exactly what this project is. It's not the right one, and it's certainly not a good one.

One of the false equivalences that has been part of the spin and propaganda surrounding this project is that this stadium is infrastructure the government should invest in, just like a bridge, school or hospital. This is quite simply incorrect. A stadium, even a multipurpose one, isn't a bridge, a school or a hospital. It isn't a public good. In answer to a question on this at the hearing last week, the TPC panel member Mr Wallace said the following:

This isn't social infrastructure. The reason is because, if you look at the social costs and benefits, there is a net social cost, so it's not justified on social infrastructure terms.

The other thing is that the stadium benefits a subsection of the community, but the whole community pays for it.

... What happens is, a subsection of the community gets a net social benefit. The benefit to them is greater than the cost to them, but the rest of the community has a large social cost. That's why collectively it's negative, but importantly, there's a huge redistribution effect here within the economy.

Another economic aspect that is conveniently ignored by the boosters of this stadium is the opportunity cost. If we decide that we have \$1 billion to \$2 billion of public funding to spend on something in the infrastructure space, what would our priorities be? We would have to ask ourselves two key questions: what are our prioritised areas of need, and what are our prioritised outcomes that we want to achieve? Then we would have a process of assessing and weighing up the best use of that investment of public money. I can guarantee you, point blank, if we undertook that kind of responsible, accountable decision-making process and we had that \$1 billion to \$2 billion of infrastructure money to invest, we would not choose to spend this money on this stadium project. Why? Because we would have better options that would deliver more jobs, more direct positive outcomes for the community, more equitable outcomes, meet the more urgent needs that we're experiencing, and deliver higher and more enduring returns for the public investment. As an email writer put it to me in recent days, the proposed Mac Point stadium is a very poor use of scarce resources in this state.

There are some very loud, influential voices acting as boosters for this project because it is their industries and their businesses that will benefit from it most directly. That is entirely understandable. It is rational for a business or industry representative to act to promote their interests. But, for a government, the public interest must be their foremost priority. Spending significant public money to benefit very limited businesses in a limited part of the state is not responsible allocation of our very limited public resources. Not when there is no evidence of a proper process of assessing competing priorities and needs, weighing well-considered proposals against each other, and arriving on a preferred option that is best indicated by evidence as the best use of public money for public purpose.

Another matter to consider in the economic space is our current circumstances, which we know have just gotten worse. We know that we've had our credit rating for the state downgraded by Moody's and S&P Global Ratings, with the capital costs and increasing debt prompting the reassessment, and the stadium project and the risk of cost overruns being cited as concerns in some of that decision. We will now, as a result of that credit rating downgrade, pay more for our debt. We will spend more on our interest and that is a direct impact on the money that we will have available for government-delivered services. It's really important, and I know other members have pointed to this, too, very eloquently. This is not just infrastructure spending when we're going into debt for all of it. In fact, we will be going further into debt to pay the interest on the debt. So, we are in dire straits when a credit rating downgrade means we will be paying more. Every bit more we pay comes away, then, from something else that the government needs to provide services for. The benefits of this project haven't changed, but just in this past week, the costs have increased and the state's ability to absorb those costs has deteriorated.

In the transcript from the hearing last week, there was an exchange where Ms Thomas put a question to Mr Wallace and it went like this. She said, with some preamble:

... because there's no spare money to pay for the interest on the loans each year, and because the government doesn't have any new revenue streams proposed to pay for that interest, the government will have to take money from other areas. So we will have to cut spending in other areas in order to pay that interest, to cover the interest on the loan, or borrow to pay the borrowings.

Mr Wallace replies:

Yes, that's right. It has to be funded because to have the compound interest trap that I've explained to happen, is completely untenable - it's amazing how quickly that compound interest trap works.

This is what the economic modelling that people like KPMG, et cetera, do. They assume that governments have to be rational. They have to deal with this problem by funding it. ... So, you take the loan out for - it's a bit like the Hydro scheme - you take the loan out to get it built, but in the case of a hydro scheme, then you get the revenue during the operational period to pay the interest, if not to pay down the debt.

In this case you don't have that, so you have to find some other mechanism and the other mechanisms are - and I'm not giving financial advice to the government - but they're just obvious: tax increases; abandonment of future capital projects or future projects; reductions in spending; or a combination of all those.

That is what is ahead of us, Mr President - what I heard another member refer to in a contribution as 'stadium austerity'. I know some of this has been gone over by other members, but I'm putting it on the public record as part of my contribution too, because it's significant.

If this order goes through, and it appears that it will, this is what we're signing up for. This is what every member's choice is leading us to. In the hearing, panel member, Mr Wallace, was asked about the interest cost on the now \$1.13 billion project, noting that the interest rate is now up to 6.4 per cent, and he provided his estimation. He said this:

... \$70 million a year, except you've got to borrow the interest as well.

The reason for why you have to borrow that much and why you have to borrow the interest is because the state has an underlying significant cash deficit for the foreseeable future - without the stadium - so any cash that adds to that has to be borrowed, so all interest payments have to be borrowed.

For example, the first year you're paying \$70 million. The second year, you're borrowing another \$70 million. The interest on that first \$70 million is at 6.4 per cent, so roughly \$4 million to \$5 million, so next year you're borrowing \$74 million. The following year, you're borrowing \$80 million, so within about five years you're going to get a debt associated with the stadium

of, say, \$1.5 billion, not \$1.1 billion, and the interest costs at that stage will be \$90 million a year.

It's a completely untenable situation.

It's important to understand that loan borrowing is a financing thing, but we have to assume, as KPMG does in its economic modelling, that governments act rationally. It's a completely untenable situation.

The stadium has to be funded either through tax increases, the abandonment of future capital projects or reduction in spending in some sort of way.

Further along he says:

The economic modelling used by KPMG and everybody else in the world uses a balanced budget constraint because it knows that such a situation is untenable, so taxes have to increase. This is where I think the biggest confusion is here. People don't understand that when the government borrows money and spends it, they think it creates an economic uplift, but it doesn't. It's public money; it's not private investment. It's public money, it has to be funded, so you are withdrawing money from the economy to pay for it.

We have to look at the impact over the whole life of the stadium, including the construction and the operation. When you look at the whole lot, effectively that initial effect of government borrowing before they start to fund it and spending the money will create like a sugar hit-effect, but the economic activity after that will go down, because it has to be funded.

Something I noted in reading the integrated assessment report was the comment contrasting the approach that we're taking here with our stadium, in terms of the proportion of public funding to be provided to the project, and how that contrasts with other jurisdictions. I noticed that the integrated assessment report on page 50 in paragraph (d) said this:

While stadiums have been financially supported by public funding elsewhere in Australia and overseas, a difference here is the extent of the public funding required, (given the absence of any private investment) relative to Tasmania's small population, economic and taxation base. The Project results in a substantial cost burden on the Tasmanian community relative to the benefits the community receives.

In the hearing with the TPC panel members, Mr Wallace was asked to elaborate on that. Here's some of what he said:

... this would be a different proposition, of course, if it was a private investment, which is new money coming into the state creating activity. It's publicly funded, so it's transferred effectively from taxpayers to build the stadium. I think the main point being made here - I'm trying to think of an example - so, Adelaide Oval -

and then he goes on:

The point is that at Adelaide Oval, there are two AFL teams, there are 50,000 people who go every week for the whole year, and that cost - which say, if it was built now, may be equivalent to this cost - there's a basic fixed cost, so you can add extra capacity, but it doesn't change the cost much. The budget base of the South Australian Government is three times that of Tasmania, but you're effectively building something with the same cost but not getting anywhere near the same activity or revenue. That's the main point being made there.

It's a major public commitment for something - and I know all governments do it - that is effectively a commercial activity. It's a highly competitive national market to attract events and things like that. We have a small population in Tasmania, but importantly, we have a very narrow tax base. We have 30 per cent of Tasmanian households that effectively depend on Commonwealth income support, so the available money that the state can use as public money for assets like this is much lower than what other states might be able to do, notwithstanding the fact - even if we had the same population, the sociodemographic profile of Tasmania is another thing which is contriving against this.

It actually represents for Tasmanians a very substantial cost burden, much bigger than anywhere else in Australia relative to the benefits received. Sure, there are benefits, but they are very small. KPMG's estimate of an increase of \$27 million in GSP ... the error range is much greater than \$27 million. Sure, there are benefits, but they are very small compared to the cost, and the cost for Tasmania is relatively much larger than any other major capital in Australia.

That's quite categorical: a good explanation as to why we can't compare ourselves to what's happening in Adelaide or in Perth. There are many reasons we can't, but that's an important economic one. We are simply a different jurisdiction. We have different circumstances, we have different resources, and we have different demographics. The cost is higher for us here; the benefits are less.

Virtually as soon as the TPC panel's integrated assessment report was publicly released in September, the Premier, his government, and various other pro-stadium MPs began casting aspersions on the economic assessment made by the panel which led them to their benefit-to-cost ratio of 0.45. Now, what is very clear in the integrated assessment report is that the panel used the proponent's numbers to make their calculations of cost-benefit ratio. Where they didn't, they explained why they hadn't, and they pointed to the fact that it wouldn't have made much difference.

Given that I believe we would all accept that project proponents, whoever they would be, would routinely be more likely to overstate the benefits of their projects, what we can almost certainly assume is that the calculation is likely to be more favourable than it should be in reality by using the proponent's numbers. In light of the all-but-professional character assassination of the TPC panel in the government's commentary on their IAR, it was certainly important that we had the opportunity to discuss their work in more detail last week.

I go again to some parts from the transcript of that hearing. Mr Wallace said this about the cost-benefit analysis that was done:

We did a cost-benefit analysis. The metrics we used were the social cost-benefit analysis, the general equilibrium economic modelling - they're complementary measures. We then looked at other metrics of value for money or affordability, and we did our own rigorous assessment of all the information that the government had given us about the costs and benefits ...

In case there's any doubt, this is entirely appropriate and credible, and the work was done by eminently credible professionals. Let's be very clear about that. Assertions were made that the panel massively undervalued social benefits and other tangible benefits. The government made it sound like the TPC didn't consider difficult-to-measure so-called unquantifiable social impacts. For example, these are some of the things that the government was asserting:

- the Premier, in a media release on 17 September the day the report was released, said this in the media release, 'the report massively underestimates the social and economic benefits of the stadium'.
- then the minister in a media release on 8 October 2025 said the government has responded by, 'outlining the stadium's unquantifiable benefits'.

I don't think so. They didn't actually try to do that in an accurate or measurable way.

- the government's response on page 18 says, in response to the cost-benefit ratio, that it just means, 'The project's quantifiable benefits are less than its quantifiable costs'.
- the minister's Statement of Reasons on page 5 says, 'Social benefits are difficult to quantify in dollar terms and many fall outside the scope of the commission's project of state significance assessment process and final report.'

The minister, though, provides no example there in that statement of reasons of that assertion.

We can look to see what the TPC actually said about the difficult-to-measure social impacts. That's what the government said about it. Those are the assertions the government made. But we can look at the TPC report, and we can see that it states at section 1.3:

- (m) The BCR of 0.45 in Table 1.2 adopts the KPMG estimates of social benefits which does not include any estimate of social cost. While it is argued that there are other social benefits that are not included as they cannot be easily quantified, there are clearly also social costs, and these have not been included in the CBA.

The social and cultural benefits are listed at 1.3(d) and (f). The value given to some social values is questioned and it highlights the need for continued investment to sustain them. I assume that this refers to maintaining increased sport participation or team pride when excitement levels diminish, for example.

At section 1.3(h) of the TPC report, it asserts that social benefits can also be social costs.

At 1.3(j), the TPC report contradicts KPMG's decision not to include certain social costs because they were temporary or mitigated. The TPC found some social costs are neither temporary nor able to be fully mitigated.

The TPC were open, were clear, were honest about how they treated social costs and benefits. To have the government suggest somehow that they'd egregiously missed things out in their assessment, when they've told us as well their assessment is based on the information and numbers provided by the government, is utterly unacceptable. Yet another impugning of highly professional and credentialed people.

Further questions were put to Mr Wallace on this about whether the panel had massively underestimated the social and economic benefits of the project, as suggested by the government. I refer to his comments in the transcript. He said this:

In my view, no. We did a very comprehensive assessment of all the information we received, particularly from KPMG, who did a very good report on all the social and cultural benefits associated with the stadium. Even though our - we received some advice that they seemed very optimistic, we actually used the estimates that they provided in our cost-benefit analysis. If you look at their social and cultural impact analysis, you will see a list of things which actually then end up as summary items in the cost-benefit analysis.

At the public hearings, this issue was raised about these 'other' benefits or costs. KPMG noted a couple: one of them I think was 'liveability' and the other one was 'brand'; actually, some of that's already in there. One of the issues with those things is not just their measurement, but they're both social negatives as well. It's quite clear that there is a negative brand impact as well as potentially a positive brand impact. It is also very clear that there are negative impacts on liveability, because of traffic congestion and many other things, as well as positive.

Further he said:

In my view there is nothing material that would make really any difference of any materiality on the results we got. There's nothing there.

Mr Wallace was asked to comment on the generated business activity that it is claimed will occur and whether that was being counted in the assessment. He said this:

The reason these benefits are very small, of course, is because it's not the borrowing of the money and the spending of the money in construction that creates the benefit over the period. It's only three things.

- it's the AFL investment in Tasmania, or what they claim that they'll invest;
- it's the interstate visitation, so people who will come to Tasmania, who didn't previously come, to attend an event at the Hobart stadium, and how long they will stay and how much they will spend; and

- it's the retained visitation, the assumption that 32,000 Tasmanians won't travel to an event on the mainland because we have a stadium here, so they'll spend their money here.

They're the three things. They're not unimportant, but relatively they're very small bickies when you look at the size of the economy and the size of tourism, et cetera.

When asked further, about the economic benefit of a new hotel that may be built in response to the stadium project because, 'Oh, the benefits, the benefits,' Mr Wallace said:

That's what a computable general equilibrium model does. What it does is has the dynamic impacts on the economy, so it takes into account - so what's the flow-on effect of this increased visitation in terms of investment, hotel rooms, et cetera - that's already in the modelling. It's not very large, because the numbers of interstate visitors isn't very large.

Further, he said:

That's why we looked at several different metrics. As KPMG says, the economic modelling is complementary to the cost-benefit analysis. The cost-benefit analysis says, 'Here are the costs, here are the benefits', and it's a static concept. That's very important. If the ratio had been much higher, you'd say, 'Look at these other things that we haven't taken into account,' but it's very, very low, of course. We looked at the economic modelling to see what sort of flow-on, what other economic activity might happen. It's not all in addition to the cost-benefit analysis but it gives you a different perspective, and that's very low as well.

Again he said:

The number for the value of interstate visitation is a static concept saying here's how much money is being spent and here's the economic value of it. In any economy there's a dynamic flow-on effect that's nowhere near as large as the initial effect. What you're saying is true, but it's a minor addition. All these tools have some sort of limitation, so we tried to address those limitations.

The biggest one about cost-benefit analysis is the use of discount rate. We tried a range of discount rates and you still get the same very low result. In this case, if we were able to do that and add a little bit of extra dynamic effect to the economy, you'd still get a very low benefit-cost ratio.

And finally:

It's a globally accepted way of doing it. The limitations are well understood. You try to do it in a way where you do various metrics - all the metrics show a fail; that's the problem in this case.

I got into quite a bit of detail there to make it really clear that the assessment done by the TPC panel on the economics of this stack up. That the accusations that were made by the Premier of them failing to do this job properly, don't stack up. The fact that the Premier made those in the public domain, that the media amplified them and boosted them further and gave them credibility unquestioningly, is actually quite disgraceful.

Yet we still keep seeing people making completely unfounded boosterism claims about the benefits of this stadium. Just last week, after coming in to give us a briefing, Brendon Gale rushed out to the media to tell them all about how there would be a \$2 billion uplift to the state's economy from this stadium. Fortunately, we were able to also ask about that in our hearing with the panel members. Mr Wallace, who was the economic expert on the panel, when asked about this apparent \$2 billion uplift that the state may get, said this:

What we've used is the government estimates, KPMG's estimates, and revised information from Stadiums Tasmania about their revenues and costs, so where this information comes from, I don't know. However, on the basis of the information we got, no. That is just a completely new, big number.

I think, again, there is a confusion here. A total amount of money does not measure economic uplift. Total spending doesn't measure that. The value is, as I said before, the value added - economists refer to it as producer, labour and consumer surplus - this is well-established economic theory and practice. You've got to do it that way. You can't just say, 'Oh, all this money is being spent'.

What we've got to assess is, to what extent does the construction and operation of the stadium increase Tasmania's economy above what it would have been? That is what we are measuring.

The kind of baseless and wildly exaggerated claims made by Mr Gale last week are a prime example of the shameless boosterism and propaganda surrounding this project. That then gets ecstatically reported in a salivating media and, most sadly of all, it becomes believed as truth by hopeful, excited, passionate Tasmanian community members who just want the team.

To summarise this economic section of my contribution, we are deeply in debt and already borrowing to pay for operational expenses. Interest payments we make on this additional debt will redirect money that would otherwise be available for government services. Even though this is an infrastructure build, that's how it will affect our operational funding for services.

As has been alluded to by others, most spending generated by this stadium is transferred spending from locals - that's indisputable - which means it doesn't contribute anything to growth. The vast majority of the events to be held at the stadium - and I will talk more about it later - will be transferred events from other local venues. Again, indisputable, and not contributing anything to growth.

However, this will potentially adversely affect other businesses, of course. It does beg the question about the appropriateness of a government-funded enterprise competing in the marketplace where it will be potentially dominant and undermine other private sector enterprises competing for the same business.

Claims that the stadium will be an economic saviour for our state are patently false and not backed by any evidence. Anywhere we, as a state, choose to spend \$1 billion to \$2 billion would generate economic activity in our state, and its economic benefit would be able to be quantified through a credible cost-benefit analysis. I will leave the economic area at that and move on to the next area of concern and categorical assessment from the panel.

It is a natural pause point, Mr President, and I wonder whether - I test the room. It's 12.30. It's five hours since we came back from our dinner break. I will test the room.

Mr President, I move -

That the debate be adjourned and my contribution resumed in the morning.

[12.34 a.m.]

**Ms LOVELL** (Rumney) - Mr President, I'm inclined - I mean, we will see what other members think, and this is a debate that always is determined by the will of the Chamber, and I'm interested to hear what other members in the Chamber are feeling about this at the moment.

Personally, I'm inclined to keep going. I know it's late. It's been a long day. We have another long day ahead of us tomorrow. My concern is that we won't get through what we need to get through tomorrow, or we will be here again very late tomorrow night.

My inclination, at the moment, is to not support the adjournment. I know it's not ideal. None of us enjoy being here this late, but we have important work to do and we don't do this often. It's not that we sit at this hour of the night very frequently, so given what we're debating and the community interest and the amount of work we still have to get through tomorrow, which could take us all day again, I would be keen to keep going.

**Mr GAFFNEY** (Mersey) - Mr President, I think we should pull the pin, mainly because staff are here. We're not sure how long it's going to take tomorrow. It could be quicker than we think. It's 12.30 a.m. By the time some people travel home and get to bed, it will be 1.30 a.m. before they're asleep, then they have to be back up in five hours. I'd rather risk going for another late night tomorrow night. I would prefer to finish.

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Hobart) - Mr President, it's been a very long day for everyone and quite a stressful and emotional day for some of us. I understand the desire to finish the speeches before we debate the order or deal with the order tomorrow, but is there any reason, for example, why the Council couldn't start a bit earlier tomorrow, potentially because as the member for Mersey said, I'm more concerned for the staff in here and the people who have no choice, unlike us, about whether or not they stay here potentially for another couple of hours. Is that correct?

**Ms Webb** - Yes, easy.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I believe it would be respectful to the staff if we could adjourn tonight and potentially start a little bit earlier tomorrow when our brains are functioning better and we're probably all in slightly better spirits.

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I'm at the will of the House as well, so I'm happy to take the vote. Certainly, my preference would be that we finish the speeches, which was my intention all the way through. Everyone's entitled to have the length of speech that they have and there is no issue with that, but we have no idea of what tomorrow is going to bring. There are many items and conditions, so if we could keep going, finish these tonight, or today, then we at least have a fresh start for the Committee stage tomorrow.

Obviously, I'm at the will of the House, Mr President, as always.

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, I share the Leader and the member for Rumney's view. I'd really like to get this bit finished tonight. There's a lot of detail in the order. The reason I moved that motion in the first place was to give us plenty of time to pull that apart and get the answers to questions that are needed. For members to have to stay very late tomorrow night, and staff as well - if we're here very late tomorrow night, staff will be, too - I acknowledge it's a challenge.

These days we don't do this very often, thankfully. Back in the old days, however, we used to do it a lot. That didn't make it a good thing to do, I can assure you of that. However, this is a one-off. It's an important matter. I know people are tired, but, in my view, let's finish this part of it because there is a lot of work to do tomorrow.

I take the member for Mersey's point. We don't know how long it's going to take, but we often think that it might not take that long, and there we are, things hangover for weeks. Anyway, that's my view; other people have different views.

**Motion negatived.**

[12.39 a.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I will move on to the next aspect established by the TPC Panel as a basis for recommending that the stadium process not proceed, which is heritage.

In conducting the integrated assessment of this project, 'The Commission must seek to further the objectives in Schedule 1 of the *State Policies and Procedures Act*.' One of those objectives is to provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water.

The commission concluded the project is not fair as it will extensively and irreparably damage the historic cultural heritage of the heritage-listed buildings in Hunter Street, the Engineers Building, and most particularly, the Cenotaph. The panel has concluded that the adverse effects are unacceptable.

It's interesting when you read the TPC panel's Integrated Assessment Report. It's incredibly clearly written and it's incredibly accessible to read, in that it doesn't use long-winded expressions or much curly language. It states things very plainly and, in fact, in

some ways to its detriment, perhaps, it states things in what we might think of as fairly mild language.

When the panel concludes that the adverse effects are 'unacceptable', that doesn't necessarily sound too bad. That sounds like something maybe we can tolerate and that isn't a big deal. Something's 'unacceptable' - lots of things are unacceptable. Sometimes, the quality of my sandwich at lunch is 'unacceptable'. When we spoke to the panel last week at the hearing, it became clearer that it would be a mistake to read the language used by the panel and downgrade it into more mildness. When we read a statement such as this, that the panel has concluded that 'the adverse effects are unacceptable', we should take that to be an absolutely categorical statement as it should not be accepted. 'It's unacceptable; you should not accept it,' is what they are telling us.

They identified that it is not possible to offset the impacts on these historic places and, thus, it is not a fair project according to the act. Given that the project is not fair, it can be inferred that the project contravenes the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* due to its impact on historic places, as it fails to further the objectives of the act.

The panel found the project would adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole, and the experience of it by the Tasmanian community and visitors. Sullivans Cove is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity. It's an important part of Tasmania's brand, which, according to the commission, will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts. 'Unacceptably diminished' - we shouldn't accept it.

What we are talking about here, quite frankly and plainly, is permanently ruining the heritage character of our capital city. It puts me in mind of a relevant comparable situation to what is proposed here, being that time of the green bans in Sydney in the 1970s, when residents who were appalled at the bulldozing of historic urban and green areas of the city and were not being listened to by political decision-makers turned to the Builders Labourers Federation, the BLF, for help.

BLF workers could actually have benefitted from the work on construction sites where heritage buildings were being bulldozed, but, led by people like the champion Jack Mundey and others, they developed a new concept of unionism, arguing that workers had the right to insist that their labour couldn't be used in harmful ways. They blocked work on sites and projects that would destroy valued and unique heritage for Sydney, and by doing that, they saved them. The value that the historic precinct of The Rocks, for example, which got saved by the green bans in Sydney - the value that adds to the city is incalculable today. With that proud union and labour movement history, it's even more shameful that the Labor Party in this state is supine in the face of this government juggernaut of dodgy governance.

It is also disappointing that the union movement has fallen into line behind a project that will see massive public investment, direct economic benefits to limited private interests and out of the state, while delivering minimal growth in GSP and significantly greater debt levels for our state, which will need to be paid for by the shedding of public sector jobs in the thousands. Additionally, the union movement in supporting this project is endorsing the permanent vandalism of the heritage and character of our capital city.

If the government has \$1 billion to \$2 billion of public money to invest in infrastructure, the union movement can surely recognise that such projects only deserve its support if they

provide opportunities for jobs and job security, and also deliver positive public benefit through increased GSP and are not fundamentally harmful to the public interest and unique valuable public spaces.

Where is our Tasmanian Jack Munday on this from the Tasmanian Labor Party or the union movement? Where is our Jack Munday? Jack Munday, himself, to loop it back to a local circumstance - acknowledged our local heroes of heritage right here in Hobart as an inspiration for his green bans to save The Rocks. He lauded the Battery Point Community Association, which in 1968, through its activism, saved our now iconic Salamanca Place warehouses, which were flagged for demolition. Through the activism and passion of the Battery Point group they were saved for their heritage value. That went on to inspire the green bans and the saving of The Rocks and other important places in Sydney, which are valuable similarly to Hobart for their colonial heritage infrastructure and buildings. That should be a salutary lesson for us here.

As I've already mentioned, the TPC panel also concluded that the project will adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole and the experience of it by the Tasmanian community and visitors. Sullivans Cove is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity and an important part of Tasmania's brand, which, according to the commission, will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts. Just a reminder, 'unacceptably', we shouldn't accept it.

The commission concluded the form and scale of the project repudiates longstanding planning principles and strategies that have applied to Sullivans Cove for decades and are still relevant. The planning principles and strategies were deemed to be relevant to the commission's consideration of the environmental, social, economic and community impacts of the project as part of its integrated assessment. Evidence of the current relevance of these longstanding planning principles and strategies is in the fact that they have been incorporated into the statewide Tasmanian Planning Scheme through the Hobart City Council's Local Provisions Schedule. That is Hobart's new planning scheme, which was signed off on 22 October 2025, just a couple of weeks ago. While these principles to protect Sullivans Cove may have been developed some decades ago, they have since been retained and increased in importance in our planning scheme.

In the hearing with the panel, Mr Prattley, when asked about the use of Sullivans Cove planning principles in the assessment, made some comments about that. I might state here on the record, in case people don't read about Mr Prattley and his history and professional expertise in the record of the hearing, that Mr Prattley has 58 years of professional expertise in the planning area. He's held esteemed positions in three states, including Tasmania. He was on our Planning Commission or the equivalent body when the Sullivans Cove planning schemes were being put in place. They were put in place because the heritage of our waterfront was being wrecked with unsuitable developments and it was recognised that we needed to step in to protect it. If we were still following the Sullivans Cove planning principles that were put in place, then we wouldn't be doing what we appear to be doing here today.

In the hearing with the panel, Mr Prattley talked about the Sullivans Cove planning principles, and he noted this:

While we don't have to follow the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme as such, the principles have not changed. If anything, they've been reinforced. The work that Hobart City Council has done on looking at the CBD and the

stepping up of buildings and location of tall buildings versus lower buildings on the topography all reinforce all the principles that underpinned the Sullivans Cove Planning Review. I think, from my point of view, there are none of those that are not still relevant. I'd suggest that they're of more importance perhaps than they used to be.

Later in the hearing, Ms Penn, followed up with this comment:

... the planning provisions are, as Mr Prattley said, a point in time. They are constantly being nuanced: how can we make planning better, how can we make it easier to navigate, how can we still protect what we want to protect? But what is constant and has grown and developed has been this recognition of, and commitment to, what is special about Hobart and Sullivans Cove

This gives the lie to the statements on page 44 of the government's response to the IAR, which suggests that we have moved on from the vision of the Sullivans Cove planning review. That is blatantly wrong. We have further embedded those self-same principles of that review into our planning system.

As many people have asked in their communications with me on this matter, what is the point of having a strategic planning system if the parliament votes against the system? The planning experts found that on the matter of destruction of heritage, there is nothing that can be done to ameliorate the impact of the project. There is nothing that can be done to make this project consistent with the objectives of our planning system.

This is a rule of law system and these laws should apply, and they should apply to everyone. Approving this order sends a clear message that our planning system rules don't matter. When you're a special government project, you can ride roughshod right over them in the face of expert, independent advice.

While we're talking about the desecration of our precious heritage on the waterfront in this, the capital city of our state, intrinsically connected to our whole brand, I want to take a moment to talk about the visual presentation of the stadium complex.

The commission concluded the stadium, including its roof - through its size, scale and form - will irrevocably damage and overwhelm the landscape and the urban pattern of Hobart, impacting how it is appreciated and understood. It points out that:

- from the sea level to the foothills of Kunanyi, Hobart is a natural amphitheatre with Sullivans Cove at its centre.
- according to the commission, the project will irrevocably change the way the community understands and appreciates the landscape and urban pattern of Hobart.
- the stadium, described as a 'large, bulky monolith,' would dominate the landscape and surrounding historic buildings and diminish the prominence of the Domain headland, which is what the Cenotaph sits on.
- it will create 'hill' on the cover floor which confuses the natural topography.

The roof is an example of what I regard, as a purposeful mistruth by the government and the media:

- it is constantly portrayed as transparent - it was referred to that way in the Leader's contribution today - and in every image made public and pictured in the newspaper or the media, the roof looks like clear glass.
- you can also see it in the long views that we were presented with from the Cenotaph area where it's shown as transparent, so much so that you can see through it to the Mt Nelson ridge line behind it. That will not be the case.
- It will be opaque. It will look solid - translucent, at best.
- the purpose of this deliberate misrepresentation to the public is to pretend the massive edifice that is the stadium will be less dominantly obstructive than it actually will be.

In last week's hearing with the panel, the appearance of the roof was discussed. Responding to questions on the appearance of the roof and whether it will be transparent as depicted in most images from the proponent, Ms Penn provided the following comments:

ETFE (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene) is not transparent. It's translucent at best and it reflects light. Based on other ETFE roofs I've seen, it's much more likely to be reflective and will not be transparent. I don't think it will be possible, in my professional opinion. Maybe there will be something about the circumstance about the light that means I'm wrong, but I'm just saying that a more qualified opinion is that you won't be able to see through it at all.

Further on the same page of the transcript, she said:

Regardless, our assessment is that that roof will certainly not be transparent and really won't be translucent either. And yes, it adds significantly to the perceived bulk for a couple of reasons: one is because you can't see through it, but two is because of its singularity and size. So its dimensional size is just an empirical number, then the fact that it's homogeneous, it's one single element, in the contrast of the much more broken up scale and variation of all the urban elements around it, means that its perceived size is much bigger.

Something I'm intensely concerned about is that Tasmanians, especially Hobartians, are going to get a horrifically rude shock when the reality of the appearance of the stadium, especially the roof, becomes a reality - a reality that is strikingly more monolithic and brutal than has been depicted in all promotions to date. It goes without saying that, by the time we get that horrifically rude shock, it will be too late because of the decision we've made here today.

I want to move on promoting my concerns about the public's misperceptions about what the appearance of the stadium will be, talking about the Cenotaph.

It is worth considering the stark differences in approach taken to respecting and involving the community when it comes to the closely linked site of the Hobart Cenotaph and the AFL-demanded stadium. Our Cenotaph is the first capital city war memorial, nationally. It has national significance. We are just 10 days shy - in fact, given the time, nine days shy - of the

original unveiling of the Hobart Cenotaph, which occurred on 13 December 1925. Many Tasmanians have a personal connection to this Cenotaph.

I mention, as an example of how close people's connections to the Cenotaph can be, that the previous member for Hobart, Mr Rob Valentine - who is with us in the Chamber today in solidarity - his great grandfather, Francis David Valentine, was an officiating dignitary at the opening of the Cenotaph on 13 December in 1925 in his role as the mayor of Hobart at the time. When I think about that, and all the other personal connections that many Tasmanians have with the Cenotaph, Madam Deputy President - in fact, you mentioned your own in your contribution earlier today with members of your family who had been away to serve and some of whom didn't come back - the Cenotaph is special for many of us. I imagine, with quite some sadness, how our forebears would feel today about the decision we're making about the irrevocable harm to the Cenotaph, especially as, in the early 1900s, they deliberately chose that particular site on the Domain headland for significant reasons.

At the time, this is how it went: the community was consulted over the site. It was carefully reviewed, selected and finalised because it met the cultural, spiritual and sightline criteria - of which we have had thoughtful briefings during our preparations for today.

As someone who has been privileged to attend remembrance ceremonies at the Hobart Cenotaph representing the electorate of Nelson, I have always appreciated the foresight of those Hobartians and broader Tasmanians for their conscientious and community-orientated deliberations in arriving at and designing the site. I felt deep gratitude for that foresight as I've stood there in the gentle breeze - sometimes icy cold wind - and listened to the shifting of the horses' hooves of the Light Brigade and the dawn bugle of Anzac Day, and the solemn minute of silence, for example, on Remembrance Day.

Ironically and sadly, this site, dedicated to reminding us all of 'lest we forget', is the very site it appears we are at risk of forgetting the community effort and goals to secure a permanent and respectful location dedicated to community loss, sacrifice and remembrance.

Every element of the setting of our Cenotaph is meaningful and largely unchanged in its essence and sacred properties for over 100 years. It has deep meaning for all Tasmanians. This was the place families came, and continue to come, to grieve. It was built as the Cenotaph for Tasmania - the state, the whole state - as a place of significance in our capital city, in a place of honour in that city. It represents intangible heritage, the essence of a place and the feeling it generates. That essence reinforces a sense of connection and identity.

Visual prominence of the Cenotaph in its precinct is intrinsic to its value. Important sightlines to the cove, to St George's Church, and the river are part of the Cenotaph commemorative language. Blocking the sightlines is not just changing a view; it is ruining the essence and sacredness of the place. It's trampling on the careful, community-driven hopes, and careful planning of the citizens of Hobart 100 years ago who had the foresight and the vision to create a place of honour and remembrance for all eternity - or so they thought.

The Sullivans Cove planning scheme is very clear on the protection of the Cenotaph. This stadium is not just a minor intrusion into the sense of place; it is the obliterating monolith right up close and overbearing it through both its proximity and its height.

In the Integrated Assessment Report, on pages 80 to 81, paragraph (e) says:

The built form of the stadium will have a significant detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the Cenotaph and the way it is understood and experienced.

In paragraph (g):

Both the proposed built form and the use of the stadium building will have a significant detrimental effect on the historical cultural heritage and community values of the Cenotaph.

However, page 58 of the government's response to the Integrated Assessment Report, says this:

[It] acknowledges that the stadium development will have an indirect impact on the Cenotaph.

Then, it says:

... the Cenotaph has been subject to an evolving landscape around it over the last century.

They also say in the government's response that it will - the project, that is:

... offer the community more opportunities to engage with the Cenotaph and its significance, providing new viewpoints and public spaces to appreciate the Cenotaph from.

That is just so utterly offensive and wrong - each of those statements. To use the language of the Integrated Assessment Report and suggest that the development will have an 'indirect impact' on the Cenotaph sounds - again, here we get tripped up by the seemingly mild language of the report. That doesn't sound too bad. An indirect effect sounds not that bad. We unpacked that in a minute with the panel when we spoke to them, but the government is using that to diminish the sound of that impact.

Then, to say that it's been subject to an evolving landscape for over a century is such a half-truth. Of course, our city has changed over that century, but the thing that has been preserved throughout utterly are all the intended characteristics and sacred properties of that precinct area, for the Cenotaph. The sightlines have never been disrupted in any way across that century; they have been respected and preserved.

For the government to suggest somehow that this stadium, which utterly decimates the essence of the Cenotaph precinct, is somehow just part of a developing city, just like other things have changed around it, is utterly wrong and disrespectful.

To suggest that it will offer the community more opportunities to engage with the Cenotaph is an absolute joke, quite frankly. It's a lie and a joke.

From the transcript, we asked the panel, and Ms Penn answered these questions to clarify what was said about the Cenotaph in the report and this comment about the stadium development having an indirect impact on the Cenotaph. She explained it like this. She told us

that the proponent's heritage expert, Jim Gardner, had made an assessment that had produced that language of an indirect impact. To explain what that language means, she said:

It's simple: if it's physically impacted, it's direct.

She went on to say:

He was at pains -

meaning Jim Gardner, the proponent's heritage expert:

and I don't have his words in my head at the moment - to point out it doesn't indicate more or less significance in terms of impact. It's not better or worse; it's just a different kind of impact.

Ms Penn then spoke more about the impact on the Cenotaph on this project. I'm going to quote from her a bit. This is clearly an area that she not only has extensive expertise in, but also strong views about. Here's how she starts it:

... I have very strong views and I believe the whole panel does, and we were informed, and those views were intensified by the evidence we received from the RSL and others who addressed us on this matter. The Cenotaph is an object, it's a physical object, but it's not just that. It's on the Domain, which is the prime piece of Hobart's landscape.

And further:

And that headland, with Battery Point, are the two elements that embrace the cove and they form part of Hobart's identity. They're recognisable: that's part of Hobart. That is a really prime, significant piece of land. The fact that the Cenotaph is on it was a decision that was made 100 years ago - in fact, exactly 100 years ago -

And further down:

... and that's been protected and maintained through the last 100 years by successive local and state governments as sacrosanct. So what that tells you is: the Cenotaph isn't just an object that you can go and have events at from time to time, commemorative events. They could still occur; the stadium wouldn't stop commemorative events from happening. I think that's clear, because it doesn't stop the space being used. But what it does is, as I pointed out, it's more than double the height of the headland. It's another 30 metres above the ground level of the Cenotaph in close proximity. The roof does recede as it goes away, and then it - so it's not - the height isn't right next to you, but it is very, very close.

That intrudes significantly from a visual and spatial point of view, but it also dominates - it's bigger than the headland, so it takes away the primacy of that location as the incredibly significant place that Tasmanians have nominated to commemorate returned service people and lost service people. The

concern that we express in the report is that it fundamentally undermines the primacy that has been given to the Cenotaph in that location.

I think it is also really important because that spatial role in the city and around the cove is something that people understand intuitively and subconsciously. Some people engage all the time: they visit the Cenotaph, they are very conscious of it and its role and its presence. Other people who've lived here forever probably aren't even aware of it. Who knows? People have different degrees of awareness consciously, but subconsciously, anyone who's spent a fair bit of time in the city knows what Hobart's character is, and there's a big bit of land up there that's got not much happening on it. It's like that because the Cenotaph houses it and it's because Tasmanians consider that to be incredibly important -

And further:

... so much so that nothing else happens there because we think this shouldn't be intruded on.

Further clarification was then provided by Mr Turner in regard to the Cenotaph being subject to an evolving landscape around it over the last century in that flippant statement made by the government in its response. Mr Turner said this:

Of course, the Macquarie Point area has been the subject of that and the picture on page 58 shows a number of railway sheds. That wasn't the issue for us. The issue was the size and bulk of the stadium. So it's a little misleading to contend that in some way we were ossified, if you like, in our thinking that this has to remain the same. It doesn't. It's always been earmarked for development. The issue is the nature of the development.

Ms Penn clarified that further:

There's a difference between scale and size. Size is about empirical dimensions. We know it's big, it has certain dimensions. All stadia are big; they've got certain dimensions and some of them are a hell of a lot bigger than this one.

But scale is about relations between things. Something of that same size can sometimes feel bigger or smaller depending on what it's in and around, and that's how we perceive scale. This is a very big, singular, homogeneous object, so as I said before, it just reads as a big element. It's in a relatively small city and it's surrounded by relatively fine-grained buildings and places. That fine-grained context means that you read the size of it - because it's so close and so big in that context - as really huge.

Whereas, for example, the MCG, which houses 100,000 people, is relatively a long way from the CBD. It's a bigger city, but it's also got a lot of space. In proportion to the city the MCG is fabulous. It's to do with the space proximity and its scale in relation to things. The Cenotaph is quite diminutive and

delicate in comparison, so that proximity accentuates the scale and the perceived difference between them.

The site of our Cenotaph precinct is outstanding. It's a national treasure, in fact. No doubt it is the envy of other jurisdictions. Other states would never contemplate desecrating their capital city war memorial. In fact, they protect them through legislation with great care, and they think about ways to make them a feature and a place of visitation, and a place in which to engage people who visit their city. We've done none of that, and we're about to utterly wreck the essence of our nationally significant Cenotaph precinct.

I want to speak now about this project in relation to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I don't think there has been enough discussion, inclusion, respect and acknowledgement of what this project has and will mean for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Members here will remember that the Tasmanian Aboriginal community was central to the development planned and underway at the Mac Point site prior to the stadium landing in our midst. Members will recall the important piece of work, Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty, carefully produced by Prof Tim McCormack and former Governor Emeritus, Prof Kate Warner, at the request of former premier, Peter Gutwein.

One recommendation from this report was to have a place of respect, acknowledgement and reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in a location of significance. It was this which prompted the MONA vision for Mac Point to include a truth and reconciliation art park. What an outstandingly wonderful idea for our city. What an outstandingly wonderful idea to bring together the broader Tasmanian community with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and endeavour together to move forward in a healing way.

What followed was also quite an incredible and likely unprecedented process of co-design over a period of some years. This is something that was described in detail, I recall, when I was on the PAC at the beginning of the stadium inquiry being done by the PAC. Prof Greg Lehman came in to provide evidence about that, and about the co-design process that was underway for that truth and reconciliation art park. It was a respectful and best-practice example of a place-shaping co-design with First Nations people. Members will recall, of course, that it was abruptly cut short with no warning or explanation by the government's announcement of the AFL stadium project. This was a deeply shameful way to treat the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and it has a jarring resonance back to the colonial invasion, dispossession and violence enacted on the first peoples of this place.

With this context in mind, the ongoing intersection of this project with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community is highly sensitive. It was a matter that was considered by the TPC panel in the integrated assessment and the IAR. I note the following comment is made:

No evidence has been provided that persuades the panel that the project properly acknowledges, respects, reflects or celebrates Aboriginal cultural associations and values.

This was explored further in the panel hearing with Ms Mason, commenting the following:

I think, during the hearings, it was one of the most telling aspects of submissions that we heard, in that it was the diminution from what had

originally been planned for the area prior to the concept of the stadium. As it gradually shrank and then got back to that tiny area - that dark green bit that's now there, which is based immediately by the Brooker and the Tasman Highway - it has become - 'tokenistic' is too light a word, I think, to use for this way of dealing with the ancestors.

I think also the question of what happens with the artefacts and anything that might be found in the land that has still to be explored for the making of the northern access road, for example, has not been dealt with. While there are acts which will cover that, the necessity to have that road built is incontrovertible; it's got to go ahead one way or the other.

That particular statement on page 100 is that it's very likely that project will have significant negative effects on Aboriginal heritage materials, because it seems to be almost unavoidable, but that's just the view of the panel. It may be avoidable, but it will need to be very carefully managed.

Over and above that, I think the lack of consultation with the Aboriginal community means that we were unable to give any kind of objective - any kind of assessment, really, of how the Aboriginal community felt about it, because of the reasons they give here, that we need to speak to the Aboriginal community, but they were, for various reasons, too busy or whatever. What we heard was that sufficient time simply had not been allocated.

I know from my own experience that consultation with Aboriginal people is complex, it's lengthy, it's difficult. It's very interesting, but you need to take time. You can't rush it. That seems to me to have been a failing in process here, which has led the panel to actually have to reach a conclusion that this has not been satisfactorily resolved, and in fact has been quite damaging in its way.

Mr President, it's incredibly sad to hear that said by Ms Mason in the hearing last week. It was particularly striking, I think, to hear the way she phrased that. She said, 'it has become - "tokenistic" is too light a word, I think, to use for this way of dealing with the ancestors.'. It's utterly shocking that we have not only interrupted what was a best-practice, incredibly positive and healing co-design process for an inspirational concept to be at that site, but we've replaced it with something worse than 'tokenistic'.

Mr Prattley at the hearing added some thoughts to that. He said this:

If I could just add to that, I think the evidence that we have heard showed that there had been almost a best-practice consultation process in the previous reset masterplan -

And further, he said:

... and had obviously been very productive in terms of the results that came out and included everybody; this, by contrast, this is token.

Further, Ms Penn spoke about what would constitute best practice in incorporating First Nations people into the planning and design of a project or a precinct such as being proposed here. She said this:

The only thing to briefly add with the plan, too, is that with the culturally-informed zone, as it's nominated there on the landscape plan submitted by the proponent, they do not have a landscape plan there. They've just got that designated as for future development because there needs to be consultation. I want to flag that, on the one hand, that's good; there's acknowledgement of the need for consultation. On the other hand, in terms of current practice for major urban public places now, you certainly don't allocate or corral an area and say, 'That's for the First Nations people over there.' Best practice - and it's not even best practice, it's just good practice - in Australian urban projects -

She said further:

It's disrespectful, all of those things - but what you would do in terms of getting a really good outcome from an urban planning point of view, is you'd engage meaningfully. Because the insights that come from both traditional owners as well as Aboriginal experts in urban design and architecture and so on, which is what was done, for example, at Circular Quay, they inform how you would respond to the site: how you might treat water, how you might treat flora and fauna, where you might locate certain elements that celebrate aspects of place that are fundamental to it and have been for millennia.

That's how it should be done but again, because of the appallingly tainted process here where we had to reverse engineer our way back from a preordained outcome signed off in secret by the Premier, we've been deprived of our opportunity to do what is right and what will give us the best outcome, and not just for some in our community.

Personally, I find it monumentally sad and shameful to hear our treatment of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in the matter being formally assessed and found to be worse than 'tokenistic'. Shame on us.

The key concept of the proposed stadium is that it will activate the precinct. A question we then need to ask ourselves is, will it elevate Tasmania's cultural and civic life as claimed? Will it activate the precinct and deliver urban renewal? That, of course, is the basis for the federal government funding that's being provided.

The Integrated Assessment Report, I'm looking at page 57, paragraph (g), under consistency of the project with the Mac Point Precinct Plan, says this:

The Panel considers that the Project will not support or promote integrated urban renewal of the Mac Point site.

It's a calm little sentence, isn't it? It's really easy for me to read it here, and it just rolls past our ears, but I will repeat it again because it's pretty categorical and it's pretty important because the whole bag of this project is that it's supposed to activate the site, but paragraph (g) on page 57 says this:

The Panel considers that the Project will not support or promote integrated urban renewal of the Mac Point site.

Those five experts have given us their opinion, which is an absolutely objective opinion based on expertise and evidence as they described: it will not support or promote integrated urban renewal at the Mac Point site.

From the POSS recommendation report, more detail was given. It says this:

... the physical constraints of the site, are such that it is unlikely that there will be scope for general activation of those areas of the site which are not consumed by the stadium.

They are relatively small, unlikely to support viable ongoing retail businesses and will be unattractive to visit other than to access stadium events.

The commission concluded the full activation potential of Mac Point won't be realised as the project will lead to low level activation and vibrancy with substantial blank walls with minimal room leftover for an activated, viable and mixed-use precinct. By way of comparison, there is a low-level activation, for example, when compared to other plans for that site such as the Reset Site Development Plan. You can have a look at the integrated assessment report on Table 2, page 54, which compares these. Of course, if this stadium hadn't gone ahead today with a vote - potentially we're going to have tomorrow or today, actually - we would revert to the Reset Site Development Plan as the current plan for the site. It certainly has the potential for there to be activation of the precinct and urban renewal.

The reset plan had a much higher level of development and activation potential. The Mac Point precinct plan, the current one which includes the stadium, has only 17,000 metres squared available for activation, as compared to the 135,000 metres squared for the Reset Site Development Plan.

While I note that the government is attempting some post-hoc expansion of the area to be regarded as available for activation by including extra area to apparently be taken from TasPorts, it's far from clear exactly how much, where, and for what purpose that area would be made available. It was discussed in GBE hearings last week, and it all sounds very nascent and undetermined. TasPorts cannot give away any area that is needed for the operational integrity of the ports. TasPorts suggested that they may be able to provide some area to be used for revenue-generating activities like a car park, which doesn't sound like a use that would be highly activating of the site.

The TasPorts area, which is indicated in the government response document, there's some maps there showing the areas to be activated and they've put the TasPorts areas in, coloured nicely purple if I remember rightly, and the area that they've mapped out for the TasPorts bit seems to take in a range of buildings that are already there, including MACq 01, which I don't think will be giving up its footprint for other activities. Presumably they've included that to give the impression that it's an even larger area which is ready and waiting to be activated with the site. But it's smoke and mirrors, pure and simple.

In the hearing with the panel last week, Mr Prattley was asked about the assessment of the significant reduction in the combination of commercial retail hotel floor space from the

previous reset plan to the Mac Point Precinct Plan, and he gave us some more detail. He said this:

The Mac Point Precinct Plan, while it's been approved by the minister, has no statutory weight in the sense that it hasn't gone through ... a public approval process that has applied to the previous plans.

...

I don't know whether many of you have seen a lot of the mixed-use developments that take place around Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra that have all been required by the planners to have activated space on the ground floor. The majority of them are empty or used by ancillary uses that are just getting cheap rent on the space because there is a limit to the number of cafes, restaurants and bars you can sustain. There's a requirement, to activate a space, to have a substantial amount of floor space.

I think while the Reset Site Development Plan would generate an activated area, what we're dealing with now is essentially leftover space. It doesn't have street frontage; the mixed-use development sites. Other than being set back from Evans Street, they have no street access. They are awkward shaped sites that are not likely to be particularly attractive to the development industry. The space, I think, gets 5 metres between the stadium and the building; it's not going to be an attractive space.

Ms Penn added to that, and she talked to us quite a bit about the space and the potential use of it and whether or not it would be activating. It was pretty interesting, and she had a map of the site up on the screen as she discussed it with us. If people are interested in that, they can see the video of the hearing to see what she's referring to as she discusses it. I will quote from Ms Penn for a little bit:

... on the note of activation, the Mac Point Precinct Plan - we've talked in our report explicitly about how we believe it's not consistent, but there are details and they're sort of the ones I think you've alluded to around vibrancy and activation, and it being a fabulous precinct that everybody wants to go to, which is what everybody would like and has been in place I think for a long time as an objective.

...

... activation just means it's active; people go there because it's a great place to be. A great place to be doesn't just happen by magic. You don't just build something and then it's great. It's multifaceted: usually, it works really well; it's accessible; it's easy to get to; it's amenable; it's comfortable, meaning there's somewhere to sit; it's quite warm, there's access to sun and shade; and you're protected from the elements. But also, there's stuff going on that's fun and usually that's why there is this point around an economic critical mass: it is critical to have enough activity in a given area.

...

The point is, in this case, we can't predict who will go in there, exactly, but we can say how much space there is for things to go in there, and also whether it will be a nice place to be, whether it will be safe, comfortable, inviting and amenable. Our assessment is that it won't be and that it's not possible to be because there's just not enough room on the site.

I will just repeat that:

Our assessment is that it won't be and that it's not possible to be because there's just not enough room on the site.

Ms Penn then pointed out on the screen to us the areas designated for complementary mixed-use and explained:

As Mr Pratley said, they're quite awkward and relatively small floor plates, which means that they may not be viable or suitable for a number of tenants. I want to point out they're constrained in a number of ways. The width between, that's a staircase there, between that and this envelope is about 5.5 metres. Normally, around a concourse around the stadium, you'd have a minimum of 15. I think, Marvel Stadium, at one point it gets down to about 10 metres at one spot where a couple of buildings and a corner comes in on plan, but then it quite quickly fans out. That 5-or-so metres continues along for the whole frontage of that building.

This is a vehicle ramp; that's another stair and a lift. The stair there is 2.4 metres wide, so as far as access goes, it's a relatively narrow stair for large groups of people. Let's say it's event mode, so it's active because it's full of people, hopefully having a great time at a footy match or a concert or whatever. There's no room for anything out here. In addition to those, accommodating those pedestrian flows, so anything out here being trees or seats or - even rubbish bins, you would be hard-pressed to find a spot to put those in a way that they wouldn't impede the flow, particularly from emergency access.

She went on to say:

As a result, the landscape plans show unmitigated paving. They don't show any landscape here; they show six isolated trees, no landscaping here, because it couldn't be permitted. It would stop people moving through safely. It's asphalt paving, and then these facades are in shade for the vast majority of the time. They're shadowed by the stadium, and then the port activity has got noise and from both of these as well. They're also out of sight. So, if I was going to meet my friend at a bar here at 8.00 p.m. one night, it's winter, it's dark. When it's dark, there's not a lot happening down here.

...

This is now out of event mode. I would have to walk around to this space, and I wouldn't really be able to see very far around the corner. From a public safety, or personal safety, point of view, it would feel unsafe. It would

potentially be unsafe because there are a lot of hidden corners. That's going to make me not choose that bar. I'd probably be saying, 'Let's go down to Salamanca Place instead, or somewhere else.' There are hidden corners here.

As I said, it sort of gets worse on here. To emphasise Mr Prattley's point, there's just not enough going on to mean that you have people around anyway working there, for example, or being present to generate enough activity, because I'd feel fine going up there if there was a lot going on, if I knew there were people there.

The other thing that's just following up here is that there's nowhere else in the site those things can go. This has been -

She points out, then, on the map, that on the other side of the stadium is the Aboriginal culturally-informed zone, although they don't have any detail on that to make further assessments. The consultation hasn't occurred. She also points out that it was required from the proponent's expert witness on emergency egress for corralling people before they can move out of the site, so that might impact on what could go in the Aboriginal culturally-informed zone itself; it may be that that just needs to be a big expanse that people can move through as well.

Ms Penn also talked about the Goods Shed, which has been relocated to the back of the stadium near the escarpment, and pointed out that that also is not an appropriate area for activation, that people will not want to walk through the site to it, that it won't feel safe, that it's a remote part of the site - that for any events held there, people will just arrive by car and get dropped off; they won't be hanging about in other parts of the precinct.

I definitely want to put here on our public record of this place, just in case anyone was in any doubt as a result of all the baseless, hyperbolic claims made by the government about activation of this area. I want to put this on the record categorically: outside of major events, that precinct will be dormant. It will be a dead zone, and it will be an unsafe dead zone at that.

Speaking of events at the stadium, there's plenty of lovely little graphics. I'm looking at one here in my notes that I think is taken from the government's response document, much that it galls me to call it that, given that it isn't. It's describing an annual events calendar: 334 events across 337 days. It has lovely little graphics. It talks about things, although it is double-counting things in this list, so it's a little bit misleading even in and of itself to flesh it out a bit, I believe.

In terms of the events at the stadium, I received a really interesting communication from a community member, an email which raised this issue really well, so I thought I will use that as my discussion on some of the matters to do with events at the stadium. From a community member, this is what they wrote to me:

You will see that the suggestion that the 'full calendar of events' such that the stadium will be used nearly every day, is a little overstating reality. There are 37 days of sport. This assumes that the Heads of Agreement signed by Cricket Tasmania translates to a contract. However, those events are already played here (at Bellerive) so they will not be new - they will simply be at a new venue. ... But, at best, sport will account for 3 days per month.

If we look at the other events, it's difficult to see 'an age of prosperity' sparked by the stadium. There are 40 conferences of 450+ people.

We have to remember we can already accommodate that size conference in our state. We can't accommodate conferences up to 1500; I believe 1100 is the highest we can go currently, so any conferences above 1100 will certainly be new, but those smaller conferences are likely to be transferred. I will come back to the quoting from my piece of correspondence. It goes on to say:

It is a large and expensive to operate, let alone build and maintain, structure for such events and there are many places that can already accommodate such events (with no build or maintenance costs). The majority of use, 260 'bookings' are 'corporate dinners and private functions'. One might question whether no such dinners and functions presently occur and, more importantly, why a 23,000 seat stadium is needed to accommodate such events with, presumably, a few hundred, at most, in attendance.

What the projections by the stadium proponent (the minority government) do, however, is illustrate what the TPC member stated to you - the precinct (aka a stadium as there is little room for anything else) will be a largely empty place for much of the time. And it is difficult to see how 260 business lunches and private functions will stimulate growth (most of them presently occur and, if held at a stadium, they will simply draw income from existing venues).

This is especially so when the interest bill on borrowings, without repaying capital, will be the \$50-70 million per year. And also at the cost of our beautiful heritage harbour, which will no longer be a drawcard.

I concur with everything that community member says. It is a farce to suggest that this annual calendar of events is something to celebrate, or to point to as a sign of success. Rather, it looks to be quite a picture of failure already writ large. I do wonder about the other current Hobart businesses that might be impacted by the smaller events and celebrations that might be pulled away from where they are currently held into this government-run, government-owned entity.

One of the things I've found most disturbing about the public debate around this project is the outright ageism. This negative and damaging rhetoric denigrating the right of older Tasmanians to have a say on this project, and to have their needs considered equitably in our community is, quite frankly, offensive. That the Premier and the government at no point exhibited leadership and called out this elder abuse is damning. This is a government that claims to support an age-friendly Tasmania.

Ministers from this government participate each year, as do I, in the walk against elder abuse on 15 June, which is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The core aim of this annual walk that we do together is to challenge ageism. Well, that's a massive fail, then, on the part of the Premier and his government when it comes to showing leadership on the distasteful rhetoric that cropped up and persisted around this project.

Many people writing to me took offence and were hurt by the ageist denigration. For example, a fellow who wrote to me identified a common catchcry of stadium supporters being,

'old people who don't want it and are selfishly depriving young people of opportunities. These arguments,' this fellow wrote to me, 'are simplistic and wrong. To agitate the divisive and ageist position that is offensive has become the norm.'

I understand why people feel excited about anything that may offer opportunities for our Tasmanian young people, but we have to accept and respect the fact that older Tasmanians also have a right to live in our community, also have needs in our community and have a right to express themselves on any matters of public conversation and discourse that come through this place or through our general community.

I hear loud and clear that many parents want their kids to have the same opportunities as those in other states. That is understandable and I absolutely agree with that. I also hear, though, from many parents who want their kids to have access to and be able to have pride in what makes our state unique and precious.

The stadium development is often equated by its proponents with aspiration for Tasmanian young people, as if it will provide some panacea, creating endless opportunities. Claims that this stadium is a key way that we will be able to stop the exodus of young people from our state to pursue opportunities elsewhere are naïvely optimistic at best. I understand people want us to solve that problem. They want us to be able to keep children in this state but the reality is this stadium may have some small impact for some young people in our community, but it is not a panacea and it's utterly naïve to think that it is.

Certainly, having an AFL team in our state is a source of inspiration for a lot of young Tasmanians and that is to be celebrated. It's encouraging kids to be involved with AFL football, to get excited about following our Tasmanian team, all of which are positive. Although, just as more events at the stadium complex will be transferred from other venues, my guess is that a lot of the kids flowing to AFL Auskick in the state are also cross-pollinating from other sports. That's fine; I just don't know that it's necessarily 'new' participation.

The reality is that AFL football is far from our most popular sport in this state and the member for Mersey went to this in his contribution, and I appreciate that he did. We have a far higher participation rate in soccer - the world game of football - and a huge number of children who aspire to play it at an elite level but are stymied. These thousands of Tassie kids have been stymied for years due to a lack of community facilities, a lack of a stadium suitable for the rectangular pitch and a lack of a well-supported elite-level state-based team. This is a sport that has been crying out for support from our state government for years and years and years. Yet, we have a captain's pick by the Premier for AFL to get, not just a bit of extra support, but the whole kit and caboodle of support, pretty much, and that's incredibly sad.

I know the member for Mersey read out at least parts of the email that we received from Victoria Morton, which I also received and took great note of. I've met Victoria and others from Football Tasmania and discussed the chronic lack of facilities and the underinvestment in football, that being soccer in this state. I won't read in more of Victoria's email because the member for Mersey has done that and people can find it on the parliamentary record in his contribution. However, I do pay tribute to Victoria who's been a tireless advocate for football in this state and I seriously hope that what we pursue here with this stadium, and the focus on AFL, doesn't detract from what needs to happen in the soccer space in our state.

The project has been categorically shown to be detrimental to our state's finances. If we damage our already dire state finances further, we damage our ability to provide basic services to the Tasmanian community and we are hurting Tasmanian young people. All this focus on, 'What about the kids? Think about the inspiration', that's all fine, but we also have to think about the practicality. There are many, many children in this state who need our support, who need government services to be delivered effectively and funded effectively. What we're doing here is approving something that will be detrimental to that, that will take it away from them.

It's an absolute twist of logic to boost the stadium concept with pictures of inspiration for children, while knowing full well that there will be teachers who will be getting sacked, that there will be nurses in our health system getting sacked, that we will see a detrimental impact on our public service which supports the Tasmanian community and Tasmanian young people, as a result of this stadium.

It's ironic to be talking about the fact that the stadium is apparently needed for inspiration and aspiration for young people, at the same time that this government, just in recent months, has, for example, been cutting TAFE courses relating to other key Tasmanian areas of pursuit such as arts and design, and relating to practical courses like lab tech courses, which feed into our school system and benefit our children. What we're doing in cutting those TAFE courses - and the minister admitted as much in budget Estimates - is we're sending those young people to the mainland to study because that's the only place they can go and do a face-to-face lab course, for example. It's not delivered face-to-face in Tasmania as of next year.

It's absolutely hypocritical of this government to use Tasmanian young people like political props as they boost this stadium project, at the same time that they know full well that they are cutting the services and support that young people need. That's purely and simply wrong. We're picking winners here. The winner is AFL football and everyone else is going to suffer as a result.

I am intensely interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians, having raised three of them myself. I am interested in the aspirations of all young Tasmanians, however. I'm interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians, for example, who play music, who are artists or writers, or who want to be scientists or academics. I'm interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians who want to pursue careers in a whole range of areas that are not available to them here at the moment or are diminishing in our state because of choices made by this government, literally as we speak.

Elite sport is a very, very small margin of aspiration for Tasmanian young people. I don't dismiss it; I celebrate it just as much as those others, but it is one small margin. What we should be doing is not preferring it over everything else, to the detriment of everything else. In a very fundamental way, we are underfunding our education system. If we know that the education system is crying out for more government support and we turn around and we build a stadium, that's going to take money from that self-same education system down the track because we will be paying a massive interest bill that we will have to borrow for or cut services to fund. We're condemning Tasmanian children and young people to poorer outcomes.

This narrative about aspiration connected to the stadium is another way that the Premier and his government is driving unnecessary division within our community. They're weaponising it. It's political weaponisation, pure and simple. It's ageist, it's pitting older people against younger people, and it's false. To suggest that anybody who's against the stadium is

somehow against the aspirations and opportunities of Tasmanian children and young people is ridiculous and offensive. I know plenty of Tasmanian young people who are not in favour of this stadium, who do not see it as a priority for our state, who have a multitude of aspirations for our state and for themselves, here, that will be detrimentally impacted by the building of this stadium.

What we are seeing here is a government that utterly failed to follow good process, responsible prioritisation of public funding, effective planning to address community need, and is now using ageist emotional blackmail as they try to bluff and bully their way out of it with their cargo cult project.

My hope for young Tasmanians is that they come to learn how unique and utterly special our state and our capital city of Hobart are. My fear, now that I see where this vote will fall, is that in times to come, when appalling desecration of the unique heritage of our beautiful city has been perpetrated by us with this massive bulk of a mediocre stadium complex, our children, then grown to adults and seniors, will shake their heads and ask, 'How could you have let such a terrible thing happen?' They'll shake their head, and what answer will we have to give them?

The best future for our capital city of Hobart is not to try to replicate all the bells and whistles that you'll find in a big mainland capital city; it's to become the best version of our unique self. The best future for our young people is in protecting, cherishing and valuing exactly what makes Tasmania and Hobart unique. That will be what draws people here and keeps people here - not a stadium. People are on a pathway to disappointment with that one. All the things about our state that young Tasmanians can learn to be proud of relate to our uniqueness, and that's exactly what this stadium is going to damage irrevocably if we go forward with it.

Unsurprisingly, we have heard a considerable amount said, including in this debate, regarding concerns about community division and the need to be respectful of each other and different views. It's in that context that I wish to raise the use of language such as 'anti' and 'anti-everything brigade' and phraseology of similar ilk. We've heard a lot of it across the time of this 'public conversation'. I use that term loosely, actually. The constant use and labelling of alternative visions by a false binary of a positive and a negative is divisive in and of itself.

Those objecting to either this stadium or other proposals are doing so because they are for something. They are for something, just as the Battery Point Community Association, back in 1968, had an alternative vision to the planned demolition of our iconic Salamanca Place warehouses, which were scheduled for demolition to be replaced by office sky rises. They were called the 'naysayers', the 'anti-everything brigade', too, those Battery Point heroes. They were called the 'anti-everything brigade', but you know what they were for? They weren't anti-everything. They were very much for protecting our heritage - our precious heritage of Salamanca, which is now something we celebrate over almost everything else in our city.

The economic value of that Salamanca precinct to us is now immeasurable, particularly to local businesses and to our broader economy. It's one of our most visited sites by tourists. It is an iconic picture of Hobart. That view up the market with the mountain behind, Kunanyi looking resplendent behind - it is absolutely the essence of our city. And do you know who protected it? The anti-everything brigade, because they were for something, regardless of the names that people called them, regardless of the derision that was heaped on their heads. They

were for something, and that is something that we value now, that we thank them for when we look back.

In this instance, I hope never to hear any other leaders in this state use that kind of pejorative language in relation to their fellow citizens and the people who they purport to lead. How dare they?

Every single person who has written to us about this project in opposition to it has been incredibly articulate about what concerns them about it. In so many cases, they are identifying things that they are for because they're worried that this will diminish them or destroy those things. Every single person who may have a view that this project shouldn't go ahead - by the way, they share that view with the independent experts who advise us on it - have that view because they are for something. I believe they are for things that are incredibly important to our city, to our state, and to our sense of identity and to our future. I thank them for their advocacy so far and, I suspect, what may be their future advocacy on this.

In this instance, the positive alternative visions that we could have for the important sense of place in our city home to be restored or prioritised for the open public space that is available at Mac Point and has had plans made about it - and we've had such things as plans for social housing, plans for an Aboriginal reconciliation art park, plans for an interpretation centre, all sorts of wonderful suggestions - all these alternative visions are also for investment and for jobs and for building our economy. They're for building the character of our city and complementing it. They're for building the cultural life of our city. It's for retaining positive and culturally important sightlines for our Cenotaph, and for investing in and promoting our world-acclaimed TSO making sure we don't interrupt the wonderful world-class trajectory that they are on.

It's worth pointing out that this is something that I fear we are now habitually defaulting to in this state: pejorative name-calling. It has terrible echoes of Trumpism, to be honest. He's quite masterful at calling his opponents names and, in doing that, trying to undermine their credibility and in fact their humanity. That is what happens here, particularly when political leaders start throwing around pejorative names in relation to their fellow citizens, in relation to their fellow Tasmanians. When you do that, not only is it hurtful, not only is it patently just wrong, it also undermines the humanity of our fellow Tasmanians and citizens. I really hope one day we will see a pivot and a turning away from such base populist political tactics.

There's been some discussion about the role of parliament in relation to this project and where we are now. I note that we had a good briefing last week from Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT), which provided us with good notes to think about in relation to our role. They were respectfully reminding us, particularly they were reminding people in this place with a local government background, that whether or not we approve or reject the stadium order, we are essentially acting as planning authorities. I know there's some nuance to that, but that's what it is. But there are some differences, too, in us doing that in this place.

They pointed out that in terms of the decision we make here, unlike planning authorities elsewhere in the normal planning system, we have virtually no oversight at all. There's no merit to review this decision. The order cannot be appealed to TASCAT on planning grounds to look at the planning merits of the stadium. They put it to us that their understanding was that section 18 of the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* alters the normal appeal rights of a

person in the community that they might have to make a legal challenge to this order or conditions, and appears to remove judicial review.

As a result, they pointed us to there being significant hurdles to any sort of reviewer oversight of the Tasmanian Supreme Court. That's fundamentally thwarting a basic concept that we have in our rule of law, that a decision can be appealable, particularly on, say, legal grounds or, if not, merits as well, and particularly in our planning system, any other method provides for that. I appreciated them drawing that to our attention. It is a serious concern. This is a binding and final decision that we're making on this order. There's no second chance on it.

We've had some new information come to us today as part of this debate. It will take more time to absorb that and understand the details of it. I will make a couple of comments in my contribution based on what has been said and made available, but they will be fairly cursory.

I must also address some of the promises made by the government. It would appear to certain members that we've only just been advised about at the outset. I have to say the nature of those negotiations in the 11th-hour announcements feels contrary to the ethos of full informed debate. But no matter, what I think of the individual commitments and the last-minute insertion into debate clearly puts us all at a disadvantage. We're not able to consider those things or be part of those discussions and outcomes, but I have tried to give a bit of consideration so I can add in some comments on a range of those apparent undertakings.

To start with, the recent undertakings announced today by the honourable member for Elwick, intended to strengthen protections and safeguards around the stadium. While I understand the inclination to attempt to insert safeguards, and I think that's a natural and positive one, I cannot share confidence that these undertakings will provide meaningful mitigation of serious and outstanding matters of concern on this stadium project.

It's also important to note we have not, and the community has not, been provided with an opportunity or time to test whether or how any of these announced commitments will have any bearing on matters raised by the independent expert TPC panel, or other advice received. Personally, I cannot see how anything cobbled together at such a late date and in such a pressure-cooker circumstance could ameliorate the serious unresolved matters of concern here.

I want to specifically address the matter of a fixed cost cap. The first point to make on that is that we have heard promises of 'not a red cent more' before, so a fixed cost cap, I'm afraid, falls into the category of *déjà vu*. I'm sure it will stay in place until it isn't.

The second point to make, to put bluntly, is that this is not good news, in my opinion. In fact, I'm not surprised that the government was quick to sign up to it. Fixing the cost guarantees a substandard venue with substandard facilities, I believe. We know that the construction associated costs will rise. Already just this week we've been discovering that the basic element of concrete-quality sand is depleting in the south. What's the law of supply and demand? When a desired product is rare, and becomes more difficult to get, the price escalates.

We don't have a finalised design of the venue, the roof is still being sorted out, and costs will rise. What happens then? When we've capped the amount at \$875 million from the state and we can't -

**Ms O'Connor** - It's not a legislated cap. There's no guarantee.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, that's right, exactly. What happens when the capped amount of \$875 million from the state can't stretch to cover inevitable, increased construction, design, contamination, remedial costs - all the other areas identified as likely to fluctuate? I will tell you what happens: corners are cut, designs are downgraded, and quality drops. We will be told the lovely glossy designs in the proponent's promotional materials were aspirations. Now, we have to be realistic, and we will have to cut our cloth to fit our whatever. We can hear the smug government statement, 'By the way, the government promised a cost cap, so we can't afford to deliver the design we promised. We will just have to accept the substandard venue and facilities'. This is a lose/lose provision for Tasmania and Tasmanians. It gives cover to the government which has repeatedly breached our trust in the past. Either the government sticks to the cap and delivers a substandard venue with substandard facilities, a lose for the community, or because it was impractical, the government breaks the promise and increases expenditure and the debt associated with the project and that's a lose for the community, too.

We have no control over the will or capacity of other identified co-funding contributors. Yes, we could ask them to increase their contributions, but why would they?

I'm sorry, but all those broken promises have consumed any political capital that this government may have on this issue. We no longer trust such promises of cost caps on the state expenditure. A new independent probity adviser sounds good on the surface, as does a design, quality and integrity review panel. More independent experts for the government to thank and then ignore, without an accompanying signed commitment that any findings and recommendations by such probity advisers or review panels will report to parliament, release and table findings and reports to the full parliament, not just to PAC - and crucially, that any findings or recommendations made by these new independent advisers are to be implemented verbatim by the government.

I'm sorry, it's just not going to cut it. The government has squandered political capital and public trust, which means for many, including myself, all this indicates is that we need to clear some more space on the shelf next to all the other independent expert review reports that this government has ignored. Perhaps we can put it right next to the TPC IAR.

We were told earlier today that the responsibility is all now on the government to meet the latest conditions sprung on us today by those last-minute deals - just as the government honoured previous deals, we will recall, with the JLN, or with the former-Liberal-MPs-turned-crossbenchers. How did the government having all the responsibility but no shame work out for them?

I'm sorry, but no, too much is on the line to now be expected to believe these malignant spots have changed on this leopard. Yes, the ultimate responsibility will potentially be future elections, but much damage can be done and opportunity squandered in the meantime.

Moving on, I welcome and appreciate the recognition that Tasmanians, with genuine deep-seated concerns about this project and its potential ramifications, have the right to still raise their voices in objection and to support their alternate vision for the site. Absolutely, I wish to reiterate that recognition. In fact, it should never even have been a question that we needed to assert that.

No matter the vote in this place, the community will continue to campaign, as is their democratic right to do so peacefully with or without our endorsement. What I didn't hear was

whether any guarantee was provided by the government to also respect any ongoing community campaigns along the rest of this project's journey. Particularly, that should include peaceful protest.

Too often, we have seen this parliament used to curtail our democratic rights to peaceful protest. I'm putting on the record here and now that all protestations of respecting everyone's views on this matter will be rendered null and void should there be any future move by this or future governments to lock out Tasmanians from the publicly-owned public space and public waterways around the project and precinct. I put on the record now: there must be no forestry-lite gazetted exclusion zones in relation to this project.

I'm also deeply uncomfortable with the potential outsourcing of our responsibility as elected representatives. It shouldn't be up to the concerned community members to have to continue restating and restating their concerns. They have been doing that for over two years now - it's probably three, actually. In many instances, concerns voiced in 2022 and 2023 have been validated over the years, such as cost blowouts, and in other areas of concerns we've heard from the independent TPC that those concerns cannot be ameliorated. But don't worry - if you hold those concerns about good governance and future budget crises, you just keep on raising them. Go on, just keep on exercising your democratic right. But that is shirking our responsibility, I believe.

If we hold those concerns, any concerns that such ramifications may eventuate, that means that we should be acting now. We have a responsibility and an absolute duty to be brutally upfront with these concerned community members. We are encouraging to keep campaigning for a better outcome.

There will not be, however, another opportunity to put the brakes on this project. Let me repeat that: this vote on this order is the last opportunity to put the brakes on and put a stop to this.

I've heard mention of appropriation bills. Yes, they may bring another appropriation bill for costs as they rise, and they should be scrutinised thoroughly, no matter what else is on the political horizon. But what happens if the appropriation bills do not deliver as promised? What do members intend to do then, if we scrutinise those bills and we don't like them? Have we forgotten already that we went to an early election this year because the budget was blocked? How many times do you think the community will tolerate that disruption, and why should they? That should be the mechanism of last resort, not a method of policy finalisation or correction.

There is no other parliamentary stop sign on this project. This is it. This vote is the stop sign before the cliff. I cannot put it any more clearly than that.

There will be nothing to be done if they bring another appropriation bill for some more funding for this project. If any member in here thinks that's not a good idea or has second thoughts about the way they voted this time around, there will be nothing they can do about it at that point - nothing, except complain a bit.

I have not had time to consider in detail the undertakings the government has made to the member for Huon, but I do wish to briefly discuss, in context of the need for intergenerationally sound and equitable budget repair, the undertaking by the government to commission an

independent assessor of budget repair progress three months after the delivery of annual budgets. Again, this limits scrutiny to the end of the budgetary process, and it leaves the government of the day to decide whether they can wear a positive, or a poor, or a mixed report card. We know how this government is going to treat report cards from an independent expert who's probably making judgmental comment on their work. They're just going to say, 'Let's see, it's one of three - they're biased, they're wrong, or it's their opinion. So let's just put it on the shelf'.

I want to remind members of the numerous calls I've made in this place for Tasmanians to have their say and have their immediate and long-term circumstances expertly considered in the development of budget repair strategies - an independent expert panel to report to parliament to undertake thorough examination of our fiscal situation and make recommendations to parliament on how to get back on short-term, immediate and long-term fiscally sound tracks - but - and this is the important consideration - within clear economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability parameters. Such a mechanism could build unity around a fiscally sound repair strategy while avoiding the slash and burn, the austerity budgets driven by political ideology that we are all now looking at and fearing.

I know other members have done this, and I want to do it, too, because I feel it's respectful. It does extend my contribution, but so be it, quite frankly. This is a contribution that warrants being thorough, and being accountable to the community. People have worked and made efforts for years on this topic - for years - and I want to honour that and acknowledge it.

I have a very tiny selection of things that I've been hearing. Many of us have shared the vast volume of correspondence we've received, and it has been very difficult to keep up with it. I've tried really hard and did quite well until recently. I also pay tribute to the assistance and the help from Cath, my staff member, but also volunteers who've been helping my office, and also my family who have been very supportive with it too. It's really tricky to try to have to explain to your kids, 'No, I can't do that now. I have to answer some more emails before I go to bed'.

I appreciate the enormous effort taken by so many Tasmanians from all around the state to communicate with us about their views on this stadium, whatever those views were. So many of them were cogent, well researched, articulately expressed, passionate, and well argued. Clearly, this took people time and effort and it was because they cared. It's because they were for something. It's because they weren't an 'anti-everything brigade,' they were a thoughtful, articulate, passionate advocate for something, either way.

I'm just going to use first names attached to some of these comments, because I don't think it necessarily identifies people. Robert said:

Investing in a large-scale stadium under current circumstances raises concerns about the long-term financial sustainability and potential debt that would impact our community. Rather than prioritising this stadium project, I believe our focus should shift towards improving infrastructure, public services and community resources that genuinely benefit all Tasmanians.

Well said, Robert, that was so pithy. What a lovely little summation. Here's another really short comment from Christopher:

I'm so tired and disappointed by the political and corporate game playing and propaganda.

I share that sentiment with Christopher. Here's one from Rodd:

Tasmania deserves its own AFL team - without having to surrender its fiscal sovereignty or compromise democratic integrity. The state should not be forced into unprecedented expenditure as the price of recognition. Nor should policy be shaped in the shadows of private meetings and corporate influence.

Well said, Rodd. I heard from Diane who said:

It is dividing households, workplaces and families as well. I've been around a while and have never been so disillusioned with our leaders. A die-hard Liberal voter all my life until this business.

I also heard from Eleanor:

It would be tragic if on the 200th anniversary of the separation of VDL [Van Dieman's Land] from mother colony, NSW (3 December 1825), the Legislative Council voted to destroy Hobart's waterfront and the human scale history it embodies.

I'm so sorry, Eleanor. I'm just so sorry. Another one:

I'm a resident of the Nelson electorate and I wish to communicate to you my personal disappointment with the Liberal government's decision to proceed with this stadium folly. As a parent of teenage children, I feel it's our obligation to look after (or even improve) our magnificent State. The concept that we should burden our children with this massive debt would be a gross misuse of our stewardship responsibilities.

One from Peter. It's quite a thoughtful one and it's a bit longer. He says:

I'm writing to urge you to vote against the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point. I'll keep this short.

While I appreciate the fervour and passion of supporters for the stadium, in its present form at least, it falls well short on every discernible level. It will cost more than this State can afford. It is in the wrong place. After analysis and due process, the people of Tasmania should say where a stadium should be sited, not a Victorian football club. Education, health and housing in our State are fundamental needs. A stadium at Macquarie Point is not.

The experts have warned us that the proposed stadium is not an economically viable proposition and to pursue it would put the State of Tasmania under further financial stress. With Moody's and S&P both downgrading Tasmania's credit rating of late, to proceed would be financially irresponsible, potentially disastrous.

The planning authorities have not supported the proposal, and I will not reiterate their findings here as I'm sure you're well aware of their expert opinion.

Please, let cooler and wiser heads prevail and save Tasmania from this monumental blunder. I would be most surprised if more viable alternatives for a stadium were not available in the future.

I agree, Peter. I think you're absolutely spot on and I'm sorry about that. Another one here, and this is quite a thoughtful one from Rob:

I'm writing in regard to the Macquarie Point stadium. I'm urging you to vote against the stadium. My father and grandfather were both returned soldiers. The cenotaph was located and designed to facilitate the line of sight across southern Tasmania to honour the fallen. The stadium will destroy this. I regard it as a desecration. This is why the RSL objects with support of their members.

The stadium is too big and will dominate Hobart's historical vistas. Some areas in North Hobart will only be able to see the stadium, not the river. I'm upset that the government uses artists' impressions which do not show the true height of the stadium. Tourists come to Hobart for its charm and character; please do not destroy this. Macquarie Point location is an opportunity to create something that adds to Hobart for everyone, a space that can be used 365 days a year.

My 96 year old mother who passed recently could not even get an ambulance when she needed one and her stay in the RHH was not an enjoyable experience, even though the staff were wonderful. It's an old building now with many problems and will need replacing soon. I worry how services will diminish once taxpayers have a huge financial burden associated with the stadium. Tasman Bridge will need replacing soon as well. There's a lot of expenditure coming up and now is not the time for a stadium debt. Tasmania's debt is already spiralling out of control. We're already seeing how badly the government has managed the new ferries. Can they be trusted with a stadium?

Every expert the government has employed has advised the stadium will lose money. Even the PoSS rejected the stadium. Why do we have experts paid by taxpayers if government ignores their advice?

I am the biggest AFL supporter, but the stadium makes no sense. Taxpayers will be paying this off for generations and lose so much of Hobart's charm. The Cenotaph will be desecrated, and services will diminish even further. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I urge you to vote no to the stadium.

People are so articulate and precise with expressing their concerns. I was going to read one that somebody else has read out already, so I will skip over that one and read this one. It's from Jamieson. It says:

I'm beginning to grieve for my city as I sense an inevitability for the stadium - i.e. its approval. Maybe in the future, as the new structure takes form, others, on seeing its mammoth size and its effect on the character of this extraordinary city, will share some of my regret. The proposed stadium will be, quite simply, in the wrong place. A huge carbuncle on the face of the city?

I have lived all my adult life in this city. I have helped to shape it (not always perfectly) through my profession. I have visited striking architectural designs around the world and formally adjudicated on some of this country's notable buildings (including Melbourne's Federation Square and the Great Southern Stand at the MCG, by the way). I suppose you could say I'm an (ex) expert, though that doesn't seem to carry any weight in this case.

The pro-stadium lobby has had an easy sell, made easy by our collective love of footy and our real desire to see a Tassie team in the big league. (Made easier still by the shameless and unprofessional one-sided reporting of Hobart's newspaper, but that's another story).

The anti argument is a bit more nuanced, isn't it? Calling for a bit less cheer squad emotion and a bit more calm consideration.

Such a thoughtful contribution.

Claims about universal support for this project from Tasmanian young people often implied that everybody who's young must be in support of this - that's not the case. There's more support amongst young people proportionally than amongst some older demographics, but it's not everyone by any means. I've been hearing lots of views from young Tasmanians, including - it might have been this morning, it might have been last night, I can't quite remember - a 15-year-old student from Woodbridge who wrote to me and laid out beautifully with subheadings and dot points across different areas the reasons that he wasn't in favour of the stadium. He did that successfully and articulately, and I really appreciated hearing it. It reminded me of something that maybe one of my kids would write if they felt strongly about something and were wanting to reach out to their local representative.

I wanted to share some of those contributions from members of the community who have been contacting us. It's only right, as part of this public record of this debate on this enormously consequential project, that we make sure voices are heard. I'm just so sorry that the thousands that we receive can't be well represented necessarily by these snippets.

This has been a long contribution, but we are creating a public record of our consideration of this matter, which is how we are accountable to the Tasmanian people. There are many aspects of this project worthy of consideration that I haven't talked about at all and won't have time to: environmental issues; transport issues, especially buses; regional impacts; and much more. Some of those matters have been covered well by other members, and I appreciate where they have been.

I also want to take a minute to highlight the bright spot in this, the outpouring of engagement that we just talked about from Tasmanian people. I pay tribute to people who wrote and who contacted us. I also take this opportunity to reiterate that consideration of everybody who's been so supportive. So many of the communications with us included words of kindness

and support, compassion for the position that we were in, and encouragement. That was incredibly important to read throughout this time.

I spoke earlier about how divisive the issue has been, as have other members. I hope I'm wrong, but I fear that the division that has rent the community on this, divided families, and split political parties, even, over the last two years, will continue. I fear it will. Despite the Premier desperately trying to tell himself otherwise, the parliament's vote on this matter will not be an end to it. Healing requires trust and, importantly, hope. Hope that things will improve. For many, it's hard to see that occurring after the contemptuous treatment of the community over the last two years on this matter. Where are the guarantees that this bullish and bullying behaviour, characterised over the past few years by secret backroom deals and information only being released when - it's like pulling teeth. How are we to trust that that will change?

It didn't need to be this way. So many times, that's been said. It's been said before, and I think it might be the eventual epitaph of this great white elephant that we're contemplating. It didn't have to be this way.

The team is a unifier, but it has been undermined and tainted. There has been a manifest failure of the government to show leadership, to stand up for a unified community, and to the AFL. When I moved a motion in this place requesting the Premier to seek to renegotiate with the AFL, it was defeated on the floor with members arguing we should allow the TPC to complete its job, and that that was proper process and the approach to take. Well, the TPC did complete its job. It did its job very well. It gave us a very clear instruction in the form of its recommendation. Circumstances aligned, and courtesy of the early election, they actually were allowed to complete that job, thank goodness.

Its findings mean that the AFL, if they were truly respectful of Tasmania and Tasmanians should have come. At the release of that report, the AFL should have come knocking on our door here to seek to renegotiate an alternative stadium site, given that we so clearly had expert advice that it was entirely detrimental to us to pursue this stadium. We certainly had other options that could have been explored. Imagine the respect that that would have earned the AFL if they had done something as gracious as that. Imagine the unification and the de-escalation of public discord that could have been fostered. It did not have to be this way.

Mr President, you will be pleased to know it's time to sum up. Summing up takes a little bit of time, but it's time to sum up.

Instead of focusing on the genuine and substantial challenges faced by our state, many of them manifestly worsened in the last 11 years under their watch, the Premier and his government has focused instead on one unaffordable, ill-sighted and inevitably damaging stadium. We don't yet know exactly how unaffordable the project will be because there hasn't - until today - been a cap on costs. However, we may have a cap in place, perhaps, until it's convenient for there not to be.

Just look at what's happened so far. We saw it was first \$715 million, then it was \$945 million. Conveniently, just after the assessment by the TPC, it jumped up to the \$1.13 billion that we have now. Do I hear a higher bid? Not an eyelid of the government has blinked once at any of those escalations. There's been no shame whatsoever from the government that they just keep on pushing that price up. There's no reason to believe it won't keep on rising.

It will be a runaway train and, after this week, if it proceeds - and it looks like it will - there will be no stopping the continual escalation. Week after week, there will never be another moment in time where a decision-making body has the opportunity to say, 'Stop'. There's nobody who's going to be able to say, 'That's too much, that's too far.' The only way we could do that in this place is if we blocked an appropriation bill and sent the state to an election, basically. That's not going to happen, or it shouldn't happen.

If it's a 'yes' this week, and it looks like it is, we are either signing a blank cheque or we're dooming the project to mediocrity through cost constraint. It's a lose-lose situation on this project. It can't come out ahead for us.

Not only that, we have been warned by experts in this game that political expediency will have us over a barrel throughout this whole process. Political expediency will lead to lack of transparency, to inevitable errors, and to cost blowouts. That has been mapped out very clearly for us by experts who have no skin in the game but multitudes of experience. The lesson is clear: government clients under political pressure on projects such as this are vulnerable, particularly to variation on contracts with builders, and inexorable, escalating costs.

I'm highly concerned that the near-religious fervour that has been whipped up by the government to try to push this stadium through - I'm concerned it's so exceedingly misleading, that when this project does emerge, it will come crashing down to earth and people will wake up from that fever dream and wonder how the heck we ended up with a third-rate, double-the-cost, mostly unused, massive, monolithic edifice desecrating the once unique and beautiful Hobart waterfront heritage precinct.

On all evidence, and as warned by many of the independent experts we've heard from who are not acting as boosters for the government project, we are likely to see many of the following - and I'm going to run through a little list of things we could quite likely be seeing as we go forward from today:

- cost pressures force down quality: we are likely to already be seeing that occur with the design of the project. For example, where we saw lovely pretty paving in initial images, I'm sure that that's now defaulted to asphalt in the latest plans. That seemed to be the case in what was presented to the TPC.
- we will see attractive features that have been lauded in the glossy images presented in the media to date, being cut and continuing to be cut and compromised as costs rise.
- lovely landscaped environs we've seen pictured around the stadium will fall victim to safety requirements for pedestrian movement and evacuation, and become plain, open-plan asphalt.
- there will be no attractive and comfortable places for families and children to gather to use and enjoy the site, outside of specific events inside - the environment will be too windy, too harsh, too uncomfortable, too unpleasant all round.

Will we know that we are in a special Tasmanian space at this venue and precinct because there are celebrations of our environment, our history, our community story built into the very fabric of the venue? I predict no. I predict those things will be the first things to go when costs get squeezed. Whatever the best intentions there were at the outset, I bet by now we are already

seeing that crumble as the cost squeeze sets in. The Premier said, 'not one red cent more', and now he's apparently signed up to a cost cap for his own political expediency and not for the benefit of what will be a far-from-iconic project.

Concrete everywhere, that's my prediction, except maybe in the very special places inside for the special people. I'm sure those will remain very luxurious and beautifully finished. For the rest of us, it will be concrete and nothing to connect us to Tasmanian uniqueness or the Tasmanian story. 'Not a red cent more' dooms us to bland mediocrity, and by the time that's clear, it will be too late. It will be too horrifyingly tragic to say 'I told you so' at that point. By then, we will have wrecked our beautiful capital city - our priceless heritage, our waterfront, our sacred, nationally-significant Cenotaph - all while cribbing money away, year after year, from our essential services to pay the ever-increasing interest debt.

The Premier promised a government with heart. Now, he has guaranteed that whatever way the vote went today, there will be multitudes of Tasmanian broken hearts. A 'yes' vote is an end to precious things about our capital city, which once gone can never be recovered. A 'no' vote, if it had gone through, would have been countless other ways we could have looked to invest in infrastructure to deliver our jobs and growth at a much better rate of return to the public finances.

If the vote was 'no', the Premier still had the opportunity to be a champion for the team and to go into bat for Tasmania, which would have been devastated at the idea of the team ripped away, but we could have all had his back on that, and of course, the options were still there. We could have had a true 'Team Tasmania' effort.

This decision today will tell us a lot about who we are. Are we willing to approve and reward this disparagement and dismissal of independent experts who have provided evidence-based, factual information and recommendations? Are we willing to approve this precedent-setting abandonment of good governance, accountability and integrity in decision-making? Are we willing to accept this step change into post-truth, misleading of the public, and blatant BS boosterism as the new normal for our political debates? Are we willing, in the face of what we all know to be a dire financial situation for our state, to endorse a project which, when you block out all the noise outside, we in here well know does not offer a solution, a way out, but rather a compounding of our problem? Are we willing?

What will that tell us about ourselves, I wonder? I hope instead, for our own sense of self-worth and integrity, that we are willing to stand up for our state, for the fabric of our democracy, and for the inviolability of our historic capital city.

I had hoped that this would be where we would draw a line in the sand and say, 'Enough. We require a higher standard, not a lower one'. We require a higher standard of behaviour, of governance, of aspiration and of respect for the Tasmanian people. The only way for us to require that would be to have voted 'no' on this order. So that is what I will be doing.

[2.37 a.m.]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I acknowledge all members' contributions, and certainly the endeavour and the commitment that members have gone to, to get us to where we are on this order.

Given that there have been myriad questions, and there are some answers that I want to put on the record, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

**Debate adjourned.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2025 (No. 63)**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2025 (No. 64)**

**First Reading**

**Bills read the first time.**

**Second reading made an order of the day for Tuesday next.**

**MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**Custodial Inspector Amendment (Protection From Reprisal) Bill 2025 (No. 44)**

**The House of Assembly advised that it had agreed to amendments made to the bill by the Legislative Council.**

**UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA (PROTECTION OF LAND) BILL 2025 (No. 58)**

**First Reading**

**Bill read the first time.**

**Second reading made an order of the day for Tuesday next.**

**MESSAGES FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**Parliamentary Code of Conduct**

[2.42 a.m.]

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, I have a message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President,

The House of Assembly having taken into consideration the following resolution from the Legislative Council, resolved with reference to the interim report of the Joint Sessional Committee on Workplace Culture Oversight Paper No. 26, that for the current parliament, unless otherwise

ordered, the Legislative Council and House of Assembly adopt a code of conduct for all members of the Parliament of Tasmania in the terms considered by the Legislative Council yesterday and does agree to the resolution and has filled up the blank with the words 'and the House of Assembly'.

Jacquie Petrusma  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
3 December 2025

### **Independent Complaints Commissioner**

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, a further message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President,

The House of Assembly, having taken into consideration the following resolution from the Legislative Council, resolved with reference to the interim report of the Joint Session of Committee on Workplace Culture Oversight Paper No. 26, that for the current parliament, unless otherwise ordered, that the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly resolve to establish an Independent Complaints Commissioner in the terms considered by the Legislative Council yesterday and does agree to the resolution and has filled up the blank with the words 'and the House of Assembly'.

Jacquie Petrusma  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
3 December 2025

### **Alcohol and Drugs Members' Statement**

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable members, the final message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President,

The House of Assembly, having taken into consideration following resolution from the Legislative Council, resolved with reference to the interim report of the Joint Sessional Committee on Workplace Culture Oversight Paper No. 26; that for the current parliament, unless otherwise ordered, the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly agree to the statement for members in relation to alcohol and other drugs that incorporates members acknowledgement and commitments in the terms considered by the Legislative Council yesterday, and does agree to the resolution and has filled up the blank with the words 'and the House of Assembly'.

Jacquie Petrusma  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
3 December 2025

## **ADJOURNMENT**

[2.45 a.m.]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) -  
Mr President, I move -

That the Council at its rising adjourns until 11 a.m. Thursday 4 December  
2025.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) -  
Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

**The Council adjourned at 2.45 a.m., Thursday 4 December 2025.**

## Appendix 1

tabled 3/12/26  
and incorporated  
Dean Harriss

# Dean Harriss MLC

Independent Member for Huon



30 November 2025

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Premier  
Parliament of Tasmania

The Hon Eric Abetz MP  
Treasurer  
Parliament of Tasmania

Dear Sirs

I am writing to advise you of my current position on the Macquarie Point approval order, which is to be debated next week.

As you know, I have kept an open mind while I have been working as hard as I can to understand both the opportunities of the stadium build and the issues that it raises. I appreciate your willingness to meet through that process, and the briefings you have arranged, including with your departments.

I am a foundation member of the Devils and, like the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians, I am a strong supporter of the case for our own team in our national game.

However, the stadium is a more complicated question. The process which has led us to this point has been, in my view, unnecessarily divisive and far too narrowly focussed.

The abrupt displacement of the widely-supported MONA vision for an Aboriginal Truth and Reconciliation Park without consultation or consent was reminiscent of the brutal colonial land grab, the deadly consequences of which it was intended to commemorate.

The dismissal of the concerns of veterans' organisations over the impact of the stadium on the Cenotaph disrespects the sacrifice of those who were killed fighting for our country and the freedoms we enjoy.

The exclusive focus on Macquarie Point in preference to the Mac 2.0 proposal or other potential sites which could have avoided both those consequences is regrettable.

Nevertheless, I accept that the proposal subject to the order currently before the Parliament is the only one we have, and I accept that a vote against the order is likely to result in the withdrawal of the Devils' licence and the end of the AFL dream.

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What I do not accept is that on current budget settings, we can afford the Macquarie Point stadium development. We know we don't have the cash to pay for it because we're already borrowing more than \$1 billion a year to pay for essential services like health and education. The Government has ruled out tax increases, so that leaves cuts in public services or even more borrowings on top of the headlong plunge into debt we're already seeing. Any new borrowings will be at a higher rate and thus a greater burden on our budget due to the recent credit rating downgrades by both Credit Rating Agencies.

The Eslake Report last August and the Treasury Pre-Election Report in June both pointed to a sharp deterioration in Tasmania's financial position and warned that explicit policy choices and immediate and sustained budget repair was needed.

Despite a series of recommendations in both reports, that financial repair was neither acknowledged nor seriously tackled in the November Budget. Instead, the deficit and debt is rising further, and as a result of the credit ratings downgrade, the cost of borrowings is skyrocketing.

To approve the stadium in the face of that demonstrated government inaction on the budget would not be responsible. As you observed in 2017, Treasurer: "It is absolutely reprehensible when this generation of leadership seeks to maintain its standard of living at the expense of the next generation, which will have to repay that debt with interest".

However, saying no to the stadium would leave the legitimate aspirations of Tasmanians who support the Devils at the mercy of the AFL, which says without the stadium the licence will be withdrawn. That is not what any of us want, so I am proposing a series of expectations for consideration as I finalise my voting intention of the Order.

I am prepared to consider voting for the stadium, but only on the basis that I can be convinced that the Government, and by this I mean all current Ministers and party backbenchers are fair dinkum about ending its out-of-control spending and getting the budget back on track.

That will require signed commitments to specific actions, including the dumping of long-held but in the circumstances utterly irresponsible promises such as no tax increases. Billion dollar spending commitments have to be paid for. The days of using the public purse as a Liberal Party piggy bank must end. If it doesn't stop we'll go broke. If we need to call on the Australian government for support, it will clearly not be on our terms.

Given the unprecedented use of the public finances to pay for party political election promises and the resultant increase in state debt (at least \$5 billion in 7 years on my calculations), I also require commitments that will put an end to the rorts, introduce guidelines for the proper allocation of taxpayers' dollars - particularly during election campaigns - and provide the Integrity Commission and Audit Tasmania with the

finances and flexibility to enable them to discharge their critical integrity responsibilities.

#### COMMITMENTS

I need these commitments signed by every member of the Parliamentary Liberal Party because every member has been a party to the wild west electioneering spend that has helped dig the financial hole that we're in.

The Government:

- Accepts the findings of the Eslake Report and the Pre-Election Financial Outlook Report that the Budget is unsustainable and requires immediate and sustained repair.
- Agrees to implement the Eslake Report recommendations in full, starting with the 2026-27 Budget. That includes:
  - Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of services to ensure users and taxpayers are getting value for money rather than throwing money at failed systems;
  - Raising additional own-source revenues, by identifying prior to the 2026/27 budget areas in which additional revenues will be raised and the expected amounts noting own-source revenues have fallen to less than 30% of total revenues and far below the Government's own fiscal target;
  - A new approach to infrastructure spending, with government as well as government owned business projects selected on merit based on robust cost-benefit analysis;
  - A return to an 'underlying' net operating surplus within four years and a clear and full detail of how this will be achieved through increased revenues and reduced spending;
  - Reducing the ratios of net debt and net financial liabilities to gross state product to below the corresponding averages for all states and territories within five years; and
  - Reducing the ratio of interest payments plus defined superannuation benefit payments to less than 7% of revenues within five years.
- Agrees that to provide independent oversight of progress on budget repair, Saul Eslake will be commissioned to report to Parliament against progress in each Budget from 2026-27 within 3 months of the annual budget being delivered.
  - Acknowledges the Integrity Commission's 2022 findings that there are currently no mandatory regulations, legislation or policies about how Tasmanian Ministers manage grants – including those they pledge during an election campaign and introduces legislation by April 2026 to:
    - replicate in Tasmania the management features of Commonwealth grant programs, where the rules apply to Ministers and other public officers – not just the public service;

- o create specific rules around making and authorisation of election commitments;
  - o ensure the rules apply to ad hoc or discretionary grant commitments;
  - o the requirement that Ministers must take advice from the public service before approving most grants;
  - o if the Minister's decision diverges from public service advice, they must record the reason for that in writing;
  - o includes specific rules for Ministers approving a grant for their own electorate; and
  - o Ministers must provide a statement that they have not approved grant expenditure unless they are satisfied that it is an 'efficient, effective, economical and ethical' use of taxpayer funds'.
- Further agrees that the Budget of the Integrity Commission will be increased to an average of the per capita funding of all state and territory integrity and anti-corruption commissions, starting from July 1 2026.
  - Agrees that outstanding recommendations of the 2016 Cox Report on the Integrity Commission will be implemented by June 30 2026.
  - Agrees to restore the funding of Audit Tasmania to a level required to enable Audit Tasmania to undertake at least six (6) performance audits per annum.

Yours sincerely  
**DEAN HARRISS MLC**





tabled 3/12/26  
and incorporated by  
Dean Harriss

PREMIER OF TASMANIA

The Hon Dean Harriss MLC  
Member for Huon  
Suite 1, 16 Main Street  
Huonville TAS 7109

Email: dean.harriss@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Harriss

Thank you for your letter of 30 November 2025 outlining your position on the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium and the current State Budget. We appreciate your ongoing support for securing a Tasmanian AFL and AFLW Team and your acknowledgement that this dream will not be realised without a commitment to a new stadium.

We appreciate that a new stadium is a significant investment for the State of Tasmania however it is the right investment in Tasmania's future. It delivers on the dreams of generations for a Tasmanian AFL and AFLW team that will build community cohesion and increase the participation in sport of young people in Tasmania. It will attract new families to Tasmania, and keep our young people and families here, helping our population to grow sustainably.

We understand that, beyond construction, the direct economic benefits of the stadium are difficult to quantify. However, we have heard from many about how the stadium, as community infrastructure, will be the catalyst for growth across our economy, including supporting our tourism industry in the quieter winter months. We have heard about the significant increase in business tourism which will invest directly into the Tasmanian economy. We have heard about the growth in professional sports administration and allied health, providing new opportunities for young people to pursue rewarding careers locally. Finally, we have heard from promoters that are confident that this new stadium will attract high-calibre artists, allowing Tasmanians to enjoy these experiences closer to home, rather than having to travel interstate.

The State Government acknowledges that we must deliver a pathway to a sustainable budget for Tasmania. Over the past few years, the State has invested heavily in protecting Tasmania and its community from the impacts of COVID and other global economic insecurities, which means that the growth in operational expenditure has outstripped growth in revenue. This cannot continue. We have this challenge before us, regardless of whether we build a stadium. We acknowledge that the debt servicing costs for the stadium will need to be met but this addition to the task is more than justified by the social and economic benefits that the stadium and AFL Teams will deliver.

We are confident that the Stadium, with the AFL and AFLW Teams will stimulate growth in the Tasmanian economy and lead to increased revenue to the State, including increased tourism

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contributing to higher employment (and higher payroll tax), increased consumption (and increased GST revenues), and increased development (which leads to higher land tax). Increased employment also contributes to increased home purchases (and conveyance duty).

Thank you for outlining the specific commitments that you are seeking from Government. We can agree on most and have suggested alternate pathways delivering similar outcomes in areas where we may differ. In the main, the Government agrees that the next few years will require a significant focus on budget sustainability, including careful and considered action from the Government, with the support of members of Parliament. I greatly appreciate your willingness to directly call for action on budget sustainability and to hold the Government to account on this difficult task.

We have enclosed a detailed response to all the commitments that you have sought. We confirm that the State Government's commitments detailed in this response have been unanimously endorsed by the Parliamentary Liberal Party. Importantly, the Government will commit to reducing Public Non-Financial Corporations' Net borrowings between 2026-27 and 2028-29 by a cumulative total of \$500 million.

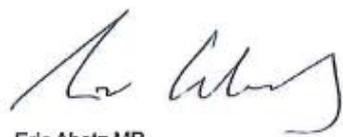
Finally, we note your awareness of Ms Bec Thomas MLC's letter of 29 November 2025 and the Government's response, which we have shared with you with permission from Ms Thomas. In your consideration of this response, we ask that you also take into account the commitments we have made to Ms Thomas. The Thomas and Harriss commitments, together, stand as significant and strong economic, governance, oversight, community, and integrity safeguards for the benefit of the Tasmanian Community.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to the Tasmanian people and for your efforts to ensure that the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium is delivered in a way that minimises risks for, and maximises benefits to the Tasmanian people.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Premier



Eric Abetz MP  
Treasurer and  
Minister for Macquarie Point Urban Renewal

**DEAN HARRISS MLC SAFEGUARD COMMITMENTS**

Proposed Safeguard	Response
<p>Accepts the findings of the Eslake Report and the Pre-Election Financial Outlook Report that the Budget is unsustainable and requires immediate and sustained repair.</p> <p>Agrees to implement the Eslake Report recommendations in full, starting with the 2026-27 Budget. That includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of services to ensure users and taxpayers are getting value for money rather than throwing money at failed systems;</li> <li>Raising additional own-source revenues, by identifying prior to the 2026/27 budget areas in which additional revenues will be raised and the expected amounts noting own-source revenues have fallen to less than 30% of total revenues and far below the Government's own fiscal target;</li> <li>A new approach to infrastructure spending, with government as well as government owned business projects selected on merit based on robust cost-benefit analysis;</li> <li>A return to an 'underlying' net operating surplus within four years and a clear and full detail of how this will be achieved through increased revenues and reduces spending;</li> </ul>	<p>The State Government accepts the findings of the Eslake Report and the Pre-Election Financial Outlook Report (published by the Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance) that the Budget is unsustainable and requires immediate and sustained repair.</p> <p>The State Government is committed to returning the State Budget to a sustainable budget footing and is preparing a new Fiscal Strategy alongside and aligned to the Financial Sustainability Report (FSR) which is currently being prepared by the Department of Treasury and Finance and due for publication in February 2026. Preparation and consultation on a new Fiscal Strategy informed by the FSR is a key step in preparation for expenditure and revenue policy decisions in the 2026-27 State Budget.</p> <p>The State Government agrees to implement all recommendations of the Eslake Report, with the exception of the report's specific recommendations for new and increased taxes, and reducing infrastructure spending to the lower level recommended by Mr Eslake, noting that the Government has accepted Treasury's recommendation for a lower rep profiling of the infrastructure budget and forward estimates in the 2025-26 Budget.</p> <p>Noting your requests, the State Government agrees to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of services to ensure users and taxpayers are getting value for money, as part of the Government's operating expenditure and grants expenditure review prior to the 2026-27 Budget. This is the desired intention of the Efficiency and Productivity Unit (EPU). The Government will also</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the ratios of net debt and net financial liabilities to gross state product to below the corresponding averages for all states and territories within five years; and</li> <li>• Reducing the ratio of interest payments plus defined superannuation benefit payments to less than 7% of revenues within five years.</li> </ul>	<p>commit in the assessment of new funding requests to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of existing related expenditure or require the requesting entity to identify low priority or low value program(s) for cessation to ensure additional funding requests are not additive or worsen the overall budget position without offset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase own source revenue, by identifying prior to the 2026-27 budget, areas in which additional revenues will be raised and expected amounts of those additional revenues for the 2026-27 Budget.</li> <li>• Require cost-benefit analysis to be included in all major infrastructure investment business cases to be considered by Government on a merit basis.</li> <li>• Affirm the Treasurer's existing public position of achieving peak debt within four years (which goes to addressing underlying net operating outcomes);</li> <li>• Commit to reducing Public Non-Financial Corporations Net borrowings between 2026-27 and 2028-29 by a cumulative total of \$500 million (broadly equating to the Mac Point borrowings of \$490.7 million as predicted in the 2025-26 Budget through to commissioning);</li> <li>• Set targets for reducing ratios of: net debt and net financial liabilities to gross state product; and a ratio of interest payments plus defined superannuation benefits to State revenue in the new Fiscal Strategy. The new Fiscal Strategy will be provided for consultation and feedback from the Multi-Partisan Budget Consultation Panel.</li> </ul>
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<p>Agrees that to provide independent oversight of progress on budget repair, Saul Eslake will be commissioned to report to Parliament against progress in each Budget from 2026-27 within 3 months of the annual budget being delivered.</p>	<p>The Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance will appoint an independent public finance and economic expert through a competitive procurement process to report to Parliament on the State Government's progress in delivering on the State Fiscal Strategy in each Budget from 2026-27. As this is likely to be a significant financial appointment, an open competitive procurement is recommended.</p> <p>The State Government will release financials on a monthly basis to enable full transparency and accountability on the Government's fiscal performance.</p>
<p>Acknowledges the Integrity Commission's 2022 findings that there are currently no mandatory regulations, legislation or policies about how Tasmanian Ministers manage grants – including those they pledge during an election campaign and introduces legislation by April 2026 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ replicate in Tasmania the management features of Commonwealth grant programs, where the rules apply to Ministers and other public officers – not just the public service;</li> <li>○ create specific rules around making and authorisation of election commitments;</li> <li>○ ensure the rules apply to ad hoc or discretionary grant commitments;</li> <li>• the requirement that Ministers must take advice from the public service before approving most grants;</li> <li>• if the Minister's decision diverges from public service advice, they must record the reason for that in writing.</li> </ul>	<p>The State Government acknowledges the Integrity Commission's 2022 Report findings and will continue to work to improve the approval, management and authorisation of Government Grants and Grant commitments.</p> <p>All Accountable Authorities are required to comply with the Financial Management Act 2016 (FMA). Treasurer's Instruction FC-12 issued pursuant to the FMA – Grant Management (effective 1 July 2019) applies to all Accountable Authorities requiring them to establish and maintain policies, procedures, controls and systems for the management of grants and grant programs. Additional guidance is also provided in the Department of Treasury and Finance Best Practice Guide for the Administration of Grants 2013.</p> <p>The Premier's Discretionary Fund (as titled since 1 July 2011, previously the Premier's Sundry Grants) is a discretionary program maintained to allow the Premier to meet funding requests of up to \$10,000 to provide limited financial assistance to groups or individuals. These payments are designed to support valued community and cultural activities with national,</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes specific rules for Ministers approving a grant for their own electorate; and</li> <li>• Ministers must provide a statement that they have not approved grant expenditure unless they are satisfied that it is an 'efficient, effective, economical and ethical' use of taxpayer funds'.</li> </ul>	<p>statewide or local significance. This program is funded under Output 2.1 Management of Executive Government Processes. Details of all payments made pursuant to the Premier's Discretionary Fund are routinely disclosed on the DPAC Routine Disclosure webpage.</p> <p>The State Government acknowledges it is timely to review current best practice rules and guidelines for the making and management of Government Grants.</p> <p>The State Government agrees to introduce legislation to amend the Financial Management Act 2016 to incorporate the sentiment of section 71 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth) (Approval of Proposed Expenditure by a Minister) as recommended by the Integrity Commission to increase transparency, accountability and outcomes focus.</p> <p>The State Government agrees to prepare and implement updated mandatory grant rules and guidelines modelled on the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (as applicable) or best practice State or Territory Grants Guidelines by December 2026. These rules will include compliance mechanisms and apply to Ministers and ministerial staff, grant commitments made during an election period, ad hoc and discretionary grant commitments, and the Premier's Discretionary Fund.</p> <p>The Government has requested that the Department of Premier and Cabinet, through its Efficiency and Productivity Unit in conjunction with the Department of Treasury and Finance, conduct a review of Government Grants expenditure, in the lead up to the 2026-27 Budget and to provide</p>
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