

Opposition to Premier's planning bypass and a ...

MACQUARIE POINT CHRISTMAS PRESENT



Rob Inglis

Construction of the proposed Macquarie Point stadium could begin before Christmas if the parliament approves the state government's newly announced special legislation to fast-track the project, Premier Jeremy Rockliff says.

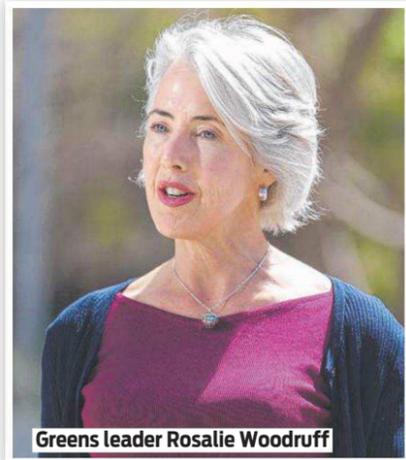
Mr Rockliff announced on Sunday that he would be abandoning the Project of State Significance (POSS) process for the stadium, instead choosing to introduce bespoke legislation that would green light the \$775m proposal before the Tasmanian Planning Commission has the opportunity to complete its assessment of the development.

The POSS process would have involved the stadium being brought to a vote in both houses of parliament after the TPC hands down its final report on the project in September.

But the government's new plan for special stadium legislation – set to be released for public consultation in May after public submissions to the TPC close – will likely mean the project comes to a vote in July, months before the commission's report is released.

Mr Rockliff said this wasn't his "chosen pathway" but that the state "cannot afford not to deliver this project".

"When it comes to the parliament (and) the Project of State Significance process, the final arbiter was always going



Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff

to be both houses of parliament. There was always going to be a parliamentary vote and that hasn't changed," he said.

"Should legislation pass the parliament, let's say in July this year – and I'm speaking of both houses of parliament – I would like to see activity on the site, shovels in the ground, if I can use that terminology, by Christmas."

Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff likened the push for a tailor-made stadium bill to former premier Paul Lennon's Gunns pulp mill legislation.

"The Premier's announcement to push through special fast-track legislation for the Macquarie Point sta-

dium is an act of utter desperation and gutter politics, designed to avoid genuine assessment in the process he himself championed," she said.

Independent Nelson MLC Meg Webb said Mr Rockliff's new

strategy was a "clear admission" that the stadium was "so manifestly flawed it could not hope to pass the rules and standards of our regular planning system", while Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds accused the Premier of putting "his head in the sand" and hoping "the issues with the stadium magically go away".

Under an agreement signed

between the government and the AFL, a roofed stadium must be built at Macquarie Point in order for Tasmania to finally be granted a team in the national competition.

Independent reports from Dr Nicholas Gruen and the planning commission have cast doubt on the estimated costs and benefits of the stadium but Mr Rockliff says he doesn't have "faith" in their findings.

The government has the numbers to pass the stadium through the lower house thanks to Labor's support for the project. However, it isn't guaranteed to win the backing of the Legislative Council, where the Liberals will also need the support of two independents.

Pembroke Labor MLC Luke Edmunds said the opposition's support for the stadium didn't

preclude it from "scrutinising" the project.

"The public sentiment has moved on this topic and I think there is support for it (in the community)," he said.

While the Premier's announcement may have provoked fierce backlash from some parliamentarians, it was greeted with delight by the construction industry.

Master Builders Tasmania CEO David Clerk said the stadium would be "a lifeline for our industry and a catalyst for Tasmania's future".

"The project promises to create a huge number of jobs, with estimates suggesting well over 100 new apprenticeships alone, supported by the state's group training organisations," he said. "That's a massive boost for skills development and for young Tasmanians entering the trades."

"As the Bridgewater Bridge nears completion, the Macquarie Point Stadium offers a seamless transition for hundreds of skilled workers. This continuity is vital – it keeps our workforce employed, our businesses thriving, and our economy moving forward."

Civil Contractors Federation Tasmania boss Andrew Winch called on the parliament to "swiftly" approve the stadium legislation. "A vibrant construction industry means more apprenticeships, better training, a stronger workforce and an economic boost for local Tasmania businesses," he said.



Independent Nelson MLC Meg Webb



Labor Pembroke MLC Luke Edmunds



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Jeremy Rockliff
Premier