



Game's in the balance

One vote could decide future of controversial stadium

Sue Bailey, Elise Kaine and David Killick

Members of the Legislative Council who will ultimately decide whether the Macquarie Point stadium goes ahead say they will await detailed briefings before they vote.

The vote is expected by the end of the year, with some political observers saying the stadium is likely to get the green light and others saying it will come down to the wire.

All three Liberal members – ministers Jo Palmer, Nick Duigan and Kerry Vincent – along with independent Tania Rattray, will support the stadium while the Greens' Cassy O'Connor and independent Mersey member Michael Gaffney will oppose it.

Labor's Sarah Lovell and Luke Edmunds have supported the stadium but the party is still considering the report of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, which rejected the building application, say-



Ruth Forrest

ing the stadium was too big for the site, would deliver fewer benefits than claimed, and would plunge the state \$1.8bn into debt.

In the event of a tied vote, Labor president Craig Farrell said he would uphold convention and vote in the negative.

Political analyst Professor Richard Herr said speculation on the vote was premature.

"The simple fact is that the government has wedged Labor," Professor Herr said.

"If they change their mind they will be blamed by everyone who wants the stadium, and if they support the stadium it will not enhance their re-



Bec Thomas

building."

Ruth Forrest said she was undecided how she would vote and needed more information from the government about specifics and costings.

"If they really want to build it, we need to do it properly, and we need to not write an open cheque for it," Ms Forrest said.

"This is a contentious project; it has completely split the community. I'm getting emails begging me not to support it and begging me to. There's no middle ground here."

Bec Thomas said she too was waiting for more detail.

"I have said all along I need

to have all the information before I can make a decision," Ms Thomas said.

"I can't say how I am going to vote until I see the order."

Ms Thomas said that she would like to see increased funding for community sports facilities.

"My fear is that Hobart will become a place where you can watch sport but you can't play it," she said.

Despite being critical of the stadium, both Meg Webb and Rosemary Armitage want to see more details on the order to be presented to parliament.

"It's a sad situation that it has become such a divisive issue, but I will not say yes or no until we've had more briefings," Ms Armitage said.

Ms Webb said the Premier must present all costs to the parliament before an order could be debated.

"The Premier has utterly failed Tasmanians by making a travesty of our planning system, showing irresponsible

disregard for independent expert advice and tramping on the wishes of the majority of Tasmanians," she said.

New MLC Casey Hiscutt, who has been a supporter of a Tasmanian AFL team, said he too was awaiting the government's detailed response on the stadium.

Dean Harriss could not be contacted for comment.

Premier Jeremy Rockliff said on Sunday it was up to each individual member of the Legislative Council to decide how they would vote.

"I always said that parliament will have the final say since we went through the project of state significance process," Mr Rockliff said.

"The next step of the process is a comprehensive response to the Tasmanian Planning Commission's report.

"We will then draft an order and consult with all members of parliament."

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