

MPs call for rethink on AFL stadium contract

David Killick

A delegation of Tasmanian politicians has demanded a meeting with the AFL to discuss a rethink on the proposed Macquarie Point Stadium.

The group of state and federal MPs and local mayors is planning to travel to Melbourne to ask the AFL to reconsider the state's team bid being dependent on the construction of the 23,000-seat roofed stadium.

The AFL says it is not changing its position.

It follows the state's peak business group asking a parliamentary committee to examine other options for the site.

Parliament will vote on the stadium's future in the coming weeks after it was rejected by the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Greens deputy leader Vica Bayley said the group would seek a meeting despite previous approaches having been ignored.

"Eighteen elected representatives from numerous jurisdictions here in Tasmania have again written to the AFL requesting a delegation meet with the AFL to talk about the stadium condition as part of the licence agreement for the Tasmania Devils," he said.

"It is clear that in the wake of the Tasmanian Planning Commission's condemnation of the stadium and official rejection of it being built, the AFL needs to reconsider its position."

Independent federal member for Clark Andrew Wilkie said the state could not bear the cost.

"A clear majority of Tasmanians know this state, which is already broke, cannot afford to spend \$1.13bn if that figure, that



Independent federal MP Andrew Wilkie, state member for Clark Kristie Johnston, Greens MLC Cassy O'Connor, deputy Greens leader Vica Bayley, Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff, Greens senator Nick McKim and Independent MLC Meg Webb speak to the media on Parliament Lawns in Hobart on Friday.



The proposed stadium.

figure, is accurate, ballooning to \$1.8bn when the cost of debt is taken in over a decade," Mr Wilkie said.

"We're already heading for a state debt of over \$14bn over the forward estimates.

"You can't keep, you just can't keep borrowing money. You can't just keep borrowing money to pay the interest on money you borrow.

"You know, the people up in government that place need to start showing some fiscal literacy."

Nelson MLC Meg Webb said the AFL needed to come back to the bargaining table.

"We know the experts have told us the stadium at Macquarie Point should not go ahead," Ms Webb said. "We're looking for a good outcome here. We should be able to negotiate our way through this."

And member for Clark Kristie Johnston agreed, saying the TPC knock-back had built a strong case for a rethink.

"The deal the AFL has put on the table for Tasmania is unconscionable, and they can no longer plead ignorance to that fact," Ms Johnston said. "Following the TPC report, for the AFL to continue to hold Tasmania to this unconscionable deal is not good."

AFL general manager for corporate affairs Jay Allen said the league was happy with the progress that had been made and was not up for renegotiation.

"The Tasmania Devils continue to make great progress led by chairman Grant O'Brien, CEO Brendon Gale, the board, and inaugural team member Kath McCann," he said.

"More than 210,000 members have signed up and pledged their support.

"A clear component of the licence bid from the Tasmanian taskforce was a new roofed stadium at Macquarie Point with a capacity of at least 23,000. The AFL's continued position is that this is a condition for the grant of the 19th licence."

Earlier this week, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry wrote to

the Public Accounts Committee asking it to examine the benefits of three competing stadium options.

"We recognise that time pressures exist for project delivery and associated agreements," chief executive Michael Bailey wrote.

"However, TCCI considers that a PAC review would represent good governance, enhance transparency, and could ultimately galvanise wider public support for whichever project demonstrates the greatest value for money, risk management, and long-term benefit to Tasmania."

The chair of the PAC's Macquarie Point Stadium costings and governance inquiry, Ruth Forrest, said the committee would seek advice on whether it rests within their scope.