

Legislative Council

Hansard

Tuesday 4 November 2025

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

MOTION

Macquarie Point Stadium - Establishment of Select Committee into Integrated Assessment Report

[12.28 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) (by leave) – Mr President, I move –

- (1) That a Select Committee be appointed, with power to send for persons, with leave to sit during any adjournment of the Council, and with leave to adjourn from place to place, to be informed by the members of the Tasmanian Planning Commission independent expert assessment panel (the Panel) that assessed the Macquarie Point Multi Purpose stadium proposal with regard to:
 - (a) The Panel's Integrated Assessment Report, dated September 2025, and Recommendation Report dated September 2025 (the Reports),
 - (b) The content, findings and recommendations in the Reports,
 - (c) The methodologies the Panel used in conducting their assessment, and
 - (d) The data and evidence the Panel relied upon in making their assessment, findings and recommendations.
- (2) That the number of members of the Committee be eleven, and that a Quorum of the Committee be six.
- (3) And that
Ms Armitage,
Mr Edmunds,
Ms Forrest,
Mr Gaffney,
Mr Harriss,
Mr Hiscutt,
Ms O'Connor,
Ms Rattray,
Ms Lovell,
Ms Thomas, and

The Mover be of the Committee.

- (4) That the Committee report by 2 December 2025.

I will speak briefly on this motion in my name, which is to establish a select committee for the purpose of securing an appropriate mechanism by which to interact with the Tasmanian Planning Commission independent expert panel regarding its Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium integrated assessment and final reports.

This is a straightforward proposition, although it does require some stepping outside our usual select committee approach. The context for this motion is the proposed Macquarie Point stadium, the Project of State Significance assessment process occurring in relation to that - culminating in an upcoming vote in this place on the order, which is expected to occur in the first week of December.

The members of this place take that vote very seriously, and many of us are taking great care in seeking information, advice and evidence on the proposed project to assist in making the decision on our votes. Naturally, a key document and key information include the TPC panel's Integrated Assessment Report, published in September, as a culmination of the Project of State Significance process. In preparation for the December vote on the order, members of this place are constantly receiving solicited and unsolicited information and briefings. We are receiving numerous briefings from the government and from the project's proponents, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. Briefings from the government and a range of stakeholders are expected to continue throughout this month.

In respect of the government briefings that we have already received on the stadium project, a common theme I have found less than appropriate is the regularity with which we are told what the TPC panel's Integrated Assessment Report apparently says or doesn't say and how we should interpret it. Comments and assertions are regularly made by the government, in public, in the media and now in our briefings, beginning from the day on which that integrated assessment report was released, which characterise the content and the findings of the IAR. These comments and assertions have not been able to be tested or clarified or responded to by the panel members.

It occurred to me that MLCs would likely benefit from the opportunity to engage with the panel members to put questions about the IAR and its content and findings, and to clarify some of the comments and assertions being made about the work done and the recommendations made. Personally, I will benefit from that opportunity, and I contacted the TPC to ask whether such an opportunity could be made available, and, if so, under what circumstances the panel members would be in a position to provide that opportunity.

I received a clear indication from the TPC panel members that they would not consider it appropriate to provide separate briefings to individual MPs or parties, but that they would be prepared to respond to any formal request from a House of parliament, which would include a committee of parliament, to answer questions in relation to its deliberations and the contents of both the Integrated Assessment Report and the report under section 26(1) of the State Policies and Projects Act, which is the recommendation report.

I have an email I received from Mr John Ramsay, Executive Commissioner of the TPC, outlining the stipulations of panel members in relation to the possibility of responding to a request from parliament to appear and answer questions.

Mr President, I seek leave to table the email, if I may.

Leave granted; document tabled.

Ms WEBB - The email also makes clear that panel members, should they appear at the request of parliament, would not respond to questions that relate to issues concerning ongoing public or parliamentary discussion in relation to the Macquarie Point multipurpose stadium proposal, subsequent to the submission of their reports, unless such questions were directly relevant to the matters of the subject of the reports. I know members will understand this is entirely reasonable.

Having established the conditions under which the panel members would make themselves available to engage with MLCs and answer questions, I gave consideration to an appropriate parliamentary mechanism to facilitate that appearance. An important consideration, in my view, was that all MLCs who wish to engage in that process should have the opportunity to do so. This precluded the use of an existing committee such as one of our Government Administration Committees or the Public Accounts Committee, because the membership of those committees is limited.

The option which presented as most appropriate for the task was to establish a select committee with a very narrow term of reference which would provide for a public hearing with the TPC panel members. The unusual element of the select committee is that it varies from our usual Standing Orders, which specify select committee memberships of three to five members. This select committee was able to be comprised of as many members as wished to participate. Consequently, the motion includes the names of 11 members. Such an approach is not unprecedented, and some members here will recall at least one other time such a committee has been formed in relatively recent times with nearly all members on the committee. Another variation from the usual Standing Orders, for the sake of completeness here on the record, are the Standing Orders related to the quorum requirements, particularly in relation to taking of evidence, which under our Standing Orders is specified as three members of a select committee but here we have set it to be six, which will be a majority of the committee.

If the Chamber supports the establishment of this select committee today, I anticipate, but don't pre-empt, that it could then have a first meeting quite promptly and determine a time later in the month for a public hearing to which the panel members can be formally requested to appear by way of a summons, which is what has been stipulated as the approach preferred by the panel in the email correspondence from Mr John Ramsay, which I've tabled.

The motion provides that 2 December be the date for reporting of the committee to the Chamber. This is prior to the anticipated debate of the order in this Chamber and the intention would be that the report would simply be the Hansard of the public hearing with the panel members, similarly to the way, for example, GBE Estimates hearings are reported on, and that members will be familiar with.

I appreciate the conversations I've had with members in progressing plans for the establishment of this committee via this motion. I note that members have largely indicated an interest to participate in the committee if it is supported by the Chamber today. With that explanation of the motion, I commend the motion to the Chamber.

Ms O'Connor - Do you close –

Mr PRESIDENT - No.

[3.20 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I thank members who made contributions on the motion. I appreciate that, and some of the support expressed in those contributions. It is quite right we would all turn our minds to consider what's before us in this place in a motion and to be free to ask questions about it, and that's not a problem.

One thing I will note before I start is that when I got up to first move this motion, I neglected to acknowledge that just before I did that, we'd had the inaugural speech from the member for Montgomery, which was just wonderful. We all found it heartfelt. I welcome him, thank him for that lovely contribution to our Chamber, and we look forward to working as colleagues in this Chamber with you. I apologise I was so focused on doing something out of the ordinary with moving a motion without notice that I neglected to do it in my opening remarks. Welcome.

I note for clarity that one of the reasons I moved this as a motion without notice in this place at this time is because in order for something like this and a hearing to occur as part of the process prior to us considering the order the government intends to bring to us in the first week of December, which is our understanding, this was the only private members' day available to establish a committee and to take it forward. In my opening contribution I didn't explain that was part of the timing issue and the need for considering a motion without notice rather than the way we'd normally do it with tabling it and then debating it at another time.

I will address a couple of the things brought up in contributions for clarity and put my position on them on the record. First and foremost, I want to make it very clear that my intention here was to find a way for members of this place to be able to engage with the TPC expert panel members on the work that they had done in a way they would find acceptable and appropriate. That's purely the function of establishing this committee because, on engaging with them about it, it was clear it would need to be a formal parliamentary process rather than an informal process of any kind.

There are a couple of things about that to elaborate on in response to matters raised. First, in relation to the member for Pembroke's concerns about a lack of consistency perhaps in the response received, I see it as entirely consistent. The panel made it clear, and it's in the email I've tabled, that requests had been made for either individual members or parties to have briefings from the panel members, and they declined that as an acceptable option. My understanding from the interactions I've had with them is that it is very clear they regard that as a risk of being politicised. In a private briefing, and if you give numerous private briefings, you can't be assured there's consistency always in the information and the engagements that are being provided, or even equity and fairness. Then there's always a risk you might be verbalised afterwards. Things you may say in a private briefing to a member or a party may then be characterised incorrectly in the public domain. Without wanting to verbal the panel members myself, I'm sharing my understanding of what looks like entire consistency between the panel members declining to brief a party in private on their work and identifying and then accepting the idea that they wanted to do it in a formal mechanism to the parliament. That looks entirely consistent to me.

I would say first and foremost, because the last thing I want to do is do what the panel, I suspect, feared is to be verballied in the public domain by others. I think we've already seen some of that from the government and others. What I would suggest is, any of these matters that are coming up in this debate that members may feel there's a lack of clarity around - whether it's the motivation of the Tasmanian Planning Commission panel in identifying this mechanism, whether it's the scope of what's been identified that can be discussed and examined in the context of the committee, whether it's consistency or otherwise with responses they provided to others- we could explore, if and when this committee is formed from this process, potentially, as a committee, to write to the panel and ask for clarification, further information on all those matters. They then can explain to us what their view is on those things. That would be a safe and appropriate way for us to engage with them and have more clarity, if, from the result of today's debate, members feel there's still a lack of clarity on those things. That's what I'd suggest so we ensure nobody's being mischaracterised here.

Having said that, on the member for Murchison's matters raised, which was a question about whether somehow the way things are described in the email I received from Mr John Ramsay mean the panel will not be able to give more information or won't somehow be able to discuss their work with us because of the way it's phrased, the part quoted from the email was that the panel members wish to make it clear they would not respond to questions that relate to issues concerning ongoing public or parliamentary discussions in relation to the proposal for a multipurpose stadium at Macquarie Point, subsequent to the submission of their reports, unless such questions were directly relevant to the matters the subject of the reports.

The committee - should it be formed - will be able to ask for clarification of that statement if it's required before the hearing process. My understanding of that statement is that they're saying they can talk about things they took evidence on, that they considered, that they fed into and included in their reports, but will not be commenting on things that may have emerged subsequent to their reports being put into the public domain.

One example actively came up in my interactions, and as I rang around each member here to discuss this committee, I raised this example so all of you will be familiar with it if you spoke to me about this committee.

For example, we've had material emerge into the public domain subsequent to the Tasmanian Planning Commission reports being put in the public domain in September. One clear example would be the Coordinator-General's economic assessments he put into an op-ed piece in the Mercury. There's been much public discussion and interaction about that. That's work that emerged after the Tasmanian Planning Commission concluded its work. It is not reflected in its reports. It wasn't taken in evidence by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. As an example, if there were questions put about that work to the panel in a hearing process by this committee, I imagine, based on what they've described here in this letter, they would decline to answer questions about that work because it doesn't fit into what they've specified they're prepared to talk about - and quite rightly. If there were questions about the economic assessments, the economic evidence and the methodologies that they used in their reports and reported on, I think that is what they will engage in - according to the way I read this response in this email. That is one small example to try to illustrate how I understand. If and when a committee is formed, we can certainly get greater clarification for members ahead of a hearing process if that's required so there is clarity.

I also think it will quite likely be a dynamic matter that would be dealt with within the hearing context. As the member for Murchison also quite rightly pointed out, and I agree, we will need to be mindful of it as a hearing progresses, if that's where we get to with this. I don't believe that the panel members would be backward in coming forward to saying if a question was put to them they felt was not appropriate or not within the scope of what they're able to speak about, they would quite rightly and quite likely say that's not something we can comment on. I note that the chair of that panel is a former Solicitor-General, or from the Solicitor General's office in the state previously, Mr Paul Turner. Yes, we will tread carefully with that matter. We could seek greater clarification on it.

What I read in this email in no way precludes them talking fully about their report, I think questioning them about it, eliciting responses from them about what our thoughts are or concerns or testing other information that's been asserted to us about their report. All of that is additional information and not available to us right now and not available through any other avenue. It is wrong to suggest that this hearing process somehow won't have the opportunity to draw out any more information than is already in the public domain. We know full well when we get submissions on things, we can always get more information out of a person when we have a talk with them through a hearing process. There is a lot of value in being able to work through, test, talk about and ask questions about material people have included in reports.

One of the things that I think is an interesting concern to raise here on this is whether there's fairness and equity here in setting this process up for the TPC panel and not others. First and foremost, in response to that, I would say as a private member in this place, I've spelled out really clearly my motivations for seeking to find a way forward with this. It's not my job to make this fair and equitable in a broader sense if people think there's a lack of fairness and equity. Any member here, if they felt somebody needed to be heard from in a way that's different to the way we're already hearing from them, could have sought to set up a process. It's really clear that what we have here is not an inquiry into the stadium.

This is not to replicate any question, a broader question, about the stadium. This is a process purely set up to be able to hear from the TPC panel members about their work, because it's the only available mechanism to do that. They've specified it would need to be a parliamentary process. Let's tease that out a tiny bit. Every other stakeholder group has had multiple opportunities to put information forward into the public domain and to discuss it further. There are all sorts of ways, parliamentary and otherwise, that they've been able to do that. They've been able to do it via a PAC process. I was on PAC when we began an inquiry into the stadium-related matters; was it 2022 or 2023? It was quite a long time ago. There's been ongoing scrutiny of this broader stadium issue through the PAC for a number of years.

Much evidence has been brought forward in a parliamentary sense in hearings and submissions through that process, including from the proponent numerous times; the government; other advocates for the stadium; people who are against the stadium; independent experts; all sorts of people have had the opportunity through that PAC process to do that and continue to. In fact, we've had hearings just as recently as last week, I believe, on this matter.

We've had the entire POSS process, which was absolutely designed to be the opportunity for all manner of evidence and submissions and materials to be put forward by anyone, really, who wanted to have a say on the POSS process. Certainly, the whole POSS process is based on the proponent's information and evidence put forward.

We've also had here in a parliamentary sense, questions available in parliament to be put to the government. The government's been able to answer questions for the parliamentary record that we've put to them for years now. That is also ongoing. We've got an estimates process coming up in two weeks' time where we will still be able to put questions directly to the government and receiving answers in a parliamentary sense on this matter.

First and foremost, it's not my job to make it fair and equitable. If that sense of fair and equitable is that somehow, we have to give everybody a go, literally everybody else in the state apart from the panel members has had a go, and continues to have a go, in terms of putting forward their arguments, material, and evidence. They've been able to do it through parliamentary mechanisms and through other mechanisms outside parliament. They've been able to do it through a very favourable media environment. They've been able to do it with the weight of the government behind them.

The only group that we have not been able to engage with about their work is the TPC panel members. It is that looming gap in what we would find valuable and important in our consideration of this matter that I sought to address here, that looming gap of this crucial piece of expert independent advice to the parliament that I thought, and continue to think, is important for us to be able to engage with further, understand better, test ideas against, and come out the other end better informed in our vote.

This select committee being established is purely a mechanism available to us to do that. I don't believe there is any other mechanism that could be delivered to enable us to do it. That's what I sought advice on, obviously, and I've arrived at this point because there was literally no other. If we'd used another existing committee, we wouldn't have had the availability of all MLCs to engage in the process who wish to, so we couldn't use an existing committee. If we needed to do somehow a big broader inquiry, we would never have got it done in the time available, plus that's beyond the purpose of this: to hear from the panel.

The panel had made it clear, both previously in communications with members or parties, and to me when I put the question to them, that they would not do private briefings or piecemeal briefings. When I said to them, 'Under what circumstances would you speak to us,' a parliamentary mechanism was the answer. So, when people ask me, 'What other mechanisms did you consider,' I asked them, 'You tell me which ones fit the bill other than the one I've put on the table today for us to consider.'

Let's be clear here: if there's a difference in response from the TPC when an initial question was put to them, 'Could you provide a briefing on your work to members of the Upper House,' and their answer was, not a private briefing in that circumstance. If one group said, 'Oh, what a shame,' and walked away and I said, 'Oh, that's interesting,' what could we do then to make it available? What circumstances could be appropriate? That might look different, then, in the response, because I actually sought to find a gate in that wall rather than accept there was a wall there. So that's the whole point of this motion.

I hope I've clarified a few of those matters for members on the record here in summing up. I certainly appreciate that there appears to be support, and I hope that that's true and we're able to form this committee in order to have a single, on-the-record hearing with the TPC panel members prior to our debate on the order. It's for a specific purpose. I do not believe there's a

need to consider broadening it, and there's certainly no practical manner under which we could at this point in time.

If members felt something broader was needed, they could have either thought of it themselves at an earlier date, they could have engaged with me when I even spoke about this with them as I was developing this throughout the last week; but 'I'm sorry, I didn't think of it earlier, could have been good if we'd had a little bit less of a time constraint over us,' I thought of it in the timeframe I thought of it in, and I brought it as promptly and as effectively as I could to this place as an opportunity for us - I think it's going to be a beneficial one - so I hope members will support us in that, so that we can do our job even better.

Motion agreed to.