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Tasmanian politicians feel the pressure ahead of Macquarie Point Stadium vote

By state political reporter [Adam Langenberg](#)

Tuesday 2 December 2025



A final vote on the Macquarie Point stadium is not expected to occur until at least Thursday in Tasmania's upper house. (Supplied: MPDC)

In short:

Independent upper house MPs say they have faced "intense pressure" as they decide the fate of a proposed stadium on Hobart's waterfront.

The vote is expected to come down to the wire, with three independents needing to support it for the stadium to go ahead.

What's next?

Premier Jeremy Rockliff says he is "nervous" ahead of the vote.

Three independent upper house MPs say they have been under "intense pressure" ahead of a vote on whether a proposed stadium on Hobart's waterfront should be built.

Members of the Legislative Council will this Wednesday start debating an order to approve the Macquarie Point stadium, last estimated to cost \$1.13 billion.

For the stadium to go ahead, the government needs eight of the 15 MLCs — including three independents — to vote in favour of the project.

Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest said that had led to intense pressure on upper house MPs, with her among those yet to decide how they will vote.



Ruth Forrest says division over the stadium has been difficult, but she is "ready to do this". (ABC News: Maren Preuss)

"Over the weekend, I felt the pressure was pretty intense, and was pretty unpleasant really," Ms Forrest said.

"Sadly, some members of the community don't seem to think it's OK to express an opinion without forcing it down someone's throat," she said.

"I was a bit fragile yesterday, spent some time with some amazing girlfriends who wrapped their arms around me, and I now feel like I'm ready to deal with this."



Former premier Peter Gutwein says he is not surprised by the "challenging fight" over the Hobart stadium.

Ms Forrest said the scrutiny over the project only really compared to that over a [Gunns proposal for a pulp mill](#) in the Tamar Valley.

"It is a difficult time. I've been there [in parliament] in some other pretty contentious debates," she said.

"This one's different. This is the first I've wondered what the hell we are doing here."

Launceston MLC Rosemary Armitage, who opposes the stadium, said she had been bombarded with emails about the project.

"Every day I've probably had 100 emails, even more," Ms Armitage said.



Rosemary Armitage opposes the stadium. (ABC News: Maren Preuss)

"It's just people giving their genuine thoughts ... generally if you get an issue, people might send a form email, but on this occasion they're not, people have actually on the main sent their own thoughts."

Nelson MLC Meg Webb, another opposed to the stadium, said she had also been struck by community division.

"There's a lot of pressure, we're hearing from a lot of people," she said

"We're certainly seeing that pressure come through in the media," she said.

Who to watch in unfolding debate

The equation for the stadium to pass is relatively simple.

The government needs independents Casey Hiscutt and Tania Rattray — who have both previously spoken in favour of the stadium but have yet to declare how they will vote — on board.

They then need one of the remaining three undecided MLCs — Ms Forrest, Elwick MLC Bec Thomas and Huon MLC Dean Harris — to vote for it.



It is unclear which way Dean Harris and Bec Thomas will vote. (ABC News)

Ms Forrest has said she will make up her mind on how she will vote during the debate, which is likely to stretch over two days.

She said her decision would be informed by an unprecedented amount of community feedback, plus several expert reports, including from the Tasmanian Planning Commission, [which recommended the project not proceed](#).

'We've done all we can', premier says

Premier Jeremy Rockliff said on Tuesday that he was "a little apprehensive and nervous" about the outcome of the vote.

"The confidence scale does tend to go up and down with the temperature of the days we've had in Tasmania in recent times," he said.



Jeremy Rockliff says he is a little apprehensive but feels he has done all he can. (ABC News: Jessica Moran)

"I don't want to say either way, but I feel as though we've done all we possibly can to get to this point and provide the Legislative Council with all the information they need.

"Some have already nailed their colours to the mast to the negative, all I ask for is that people consider the 15,000 people here on Sunday and the many, many other thousands of Tasmanians that want to take this project forward," he said.

Ms Armitage said while she had been open-minded about supporting the project, the evidence "backed up that Macquarie Point is not the best spot for the stadium".

"So it's really difficult to change your opinion when you don't see the benefit and you actually see negatives,"

she said.

Long debate ahead

The debate on the stadium will start in the Legislative Council at 10am on Wednesday.

A final vote is not expected to occur until at least Thursday, with legislative councillors likely to support a move allowing for each section of the stadium order to be debated in detail.

That process will occur after each MLC has made their initial speeches, which should give a clear indication about whether the stadium will go ahead.