

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
HANSARD

Wednesday 3 December 2025

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 10 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt]

[11.12 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Madam Deputy President, I rise to speak on the order today. I'm going to indicate to members that I have a lengthy contribution, probably significantly lengthier than the member for Mersey's. I'm noting that we're here at this time and I will begin.

I apologise to the staff for potential inconvenience, but I don't apologise for wishing to take this time to be accountable to my community, to the Tasmanians who've interacted with me on this issue over years, to the hard work and thorough comprehensive work of many, many professionals on this topic over years, and for the fact that we're making an incredibly consequential decision here on this matter. On the basis of all those things, I will be making my full contribution and if I need to do that because the House refuses to adjourn for me tonight, we will do it but, at a certain point, out of courtesy to the staff, I'm likely to move for an adjournment. I'm flagging that now.

I rise today to speak on the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025, and I do so with a heavy heart. We should never have been put in a situation we find ourselves in today. Our state was signed up to a legal agreement in secret by a Premier who allowed our dream of a cherished AFL team to become manacled to an ill-conceived, prohibitively expensive, highly inappropriate stadium in an unsuitable, damaging location.

After promising in this parliament in 2022 that the team would not be contingent on a stadium, the Premier broke that promise with his clandestine signing of a contract that had not been approved by Cabinet, had not been advised on by Treasury, had not been scrutinised by parliament, and had not been consulted on with the Tasmanian people. This was an act of betrayal to the Tasmanian people. It was an act that signalled a dissent into a tainted decision-making that would become the hallmark of this whole sorry saga. Not only did the Premier betray Tasmanians that day by setting them up for what he went on to incite to be the most divisive issue this state has ever experienced, he also confirmed his abandonment of integrity in leadership and good governance and the relegation of public interest to an inconvenience that can be discarded as required for political advantage.

To say 'yes' to this stadium project is not just to endorse an infrastructure project. To say 'yes' is to endorse as acceptable a dereliction of good governance, to endorse reckless political decision-making not based on evidence and public interest but on populism, propaganda and threats.

History will not reflect kindly on the actions of the Premier on this matter. The tone of debate from the Premier and his government has been one of populist aggression with

name-calling, disparagement of independent experts, a willingness to mislead the public, and what amounts to political threats and bullying.

With his singular failure of principled leadership, the Premier has put us between a rock and a hard place, no doubt about it. Whichever way the vote went today, the only guaranteed outcome is that a great many Tasmanians will be exceedingly hurt and angry. This is the Premier's legacy: a divided and harmed Tasmanian community, and it didn't have to be this way.

I understand that many people have a religious fervour for AFL football and are enormously excited that we have finally achieved our dream of a Tassie team, which makes it all the more distasteful that some Tasmanians with that genuine depth of feeling for a team have been cruelly whipped up into a frenzy of zealotry for the stadium by the Premier and the media based on mistruths, propaganda and false equivalences. This whole process has been a masterclass, quite frankly, in political and corporate manipulation of well-meaning and hopeful citizens.

With great sadness, it has also been impossible to ignore the level of antipathy which has been inflamed and rewarded by political leaders, particularly the Premier, by the populist, aggressive tone of public commentary. What a shocking place we find ourselves in.

That we have reached this point tells us a great deal about the utter failure of political leadership and failure of integrity in decision-making by the Premier and his government - which prompts us to ask ourselves: what could this have looked like? What should have happened?

In regard to a Tassie AFL team, as originally mapped out, we should have been granted a licence without the initial requirement of a specific stadium at a specific site, but with the intention that we would plan for a stadium after the team had the opportunity to become established and we could have a community conversation.

If that had occurred, we would have established the Devils team as the most incredibly exciting and unifying opportunity for the Tasmanian community in generations. We could then have had a respectful and positive conversation as a community about a future stadium without the pressure of a particular timeframe and without the dictate of the AFL on location.

That's what should have happened, and our state would have been elevated and unified by it. Not only that, our state would also have retained its bodily and political autonomy instead of being dictated to and violated by a powerful mainland corporate interest. This is our state; it should have been our choice.

Let's talk about that choice because, on the facts of it, it is a very straightforward one. The facts of the matter are: this project has been assessed via a planning system, and the expert independent assessment has provided a categorical conclusion and a recommendation to us as the final decision-makers. It's this:

The Panel recommends that the project should not proceed.

The IAR identifies a number of benefits and disbenefits that would accrue if the Project proceeds.

The Panel has concluded that the benefits are outweighed by the disbenefits.

That's it. That's the Tasmanian Planning Commission independent expert panel in its recommendation report, which then sets out the principal negative impacts as to why they came to that conclusion that the project should not proceed.

First they speak to economic reasons. This is in their recommendation report on page 3:

A cost-benefit analysis has been used to comprehensively assess all benefits and costs, apply monetary values to each of the significant items, and considers the impact of variability in these monetary values on the assessed net social benefit or cost of the Project.

The assessment includes or considers all costs of constructing and operating the stadium, and all economic, social and cultural benefits and costs over the period of the construction, and the Proponent's assumed economic operating life of 30 years.

And further:

The Panel has found the ratio of benefits to costs is less than 0.5.

And again later:

The Panel's cost benefit analysis shows that the construction and operation of the stadium results in a substantial net social cost to the Tasmanian community. The reason for this is that the economic and social benefits are small compared to the public cost of the stadium.

The second reason they speak to in their recommendation report is around urban form, activation and public realm reasons. It's on pages 5 to 6 of that report and it says:

Significantly, the Panel considers that the form and scale of the stadium represent a repudiation of a number of long-standing planning principles and strategies that have been applied to developments in Sullivans Cove, or controlled through the planning scheme.

And further:

The stadium (including its roof) - through its size, scale and form - will be dominant within the landscape, diminishing the prominence and significance of the Domain headland as a frame of Sullivans Cove, and standing as a significant obtrusive element in the present urban form in and surrounding Sullivans Cove. It will irrevocably change, for the worse in the opinion of the Panel, the way in which the landscape and urban pattern is appreciated and understood.

....

... The size, shape and location of the site is ill-suited to a building like the stadium - a singular, large, bulky monolith which will overwhelm those surrounding buildings and the setting.

In addition, the nature of the stadium design and what is necessary for the Project, and the physical constraints of the site, are such that it is unlikely that there will be scope for general activation of those areas of the site which are not consumed by the stadium. They are relatively small, unlikely to support viable ongoing retail businesses and will be unattractive to visit other than to access stadium events.

The third area they go to in the recommendation report on pages 6 to 7 is around reasons of cultural heritage and community values -

The IAR identifies that the Project - but essentially the stadium - will have very significant adverse impacts on a number of places, the most significant being the Cenotaph, the Royal Engineers Building and the buildings along Hunter Street.

...

The Panel has concluded that the adverse effects are unacceptable. The Project will not be a 'fair' development in that it (principally parts and features of the stadium) will extensively and irreparably damage the historic cultural heritage of the heritage listed buildings in Hunter Street and the Engineers building, and most particularly, the Cenotaph. It will also adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole, and the experience of it. The Panel does not consider that the stadium building will be iconic as claimed by the Proponent.

The Panel considers that Sullivans Cove has a prevailing 19th century historical character which is highly valued and valuable. This is a large part of its charm and attractiveness, for locals and visitors alike. It is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity, and an important part of the brand. Tasmania. Those things will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts.

These three fundamental areas of negative impact - economic; urban form, activation and public realm; and cultural heritage and community values - cannot be ameliorated by permit conditions. Nothing can fix them. Their impacts, as the panel says, are irrevocable. In the conclusion in the recommendation report, the the TPC panel says this:

The fundamental problem is the size, location and geographical features of the site, in its highly valued context, do not support the disproportionately large, monolithic building proposed. It is a building which is incongruent with the valued characteristics of its spatial context, completely at odds with the long-established planning principles guiding and informing development, and with the land and urban fabric surrounding the site and the heritage values associated with nearby places.

It goes on to say, Madam Deputy President:

Proceeding with the Project will give rise to irrevocable and unacceptable adverse impacts on Hobart's spatial and landscape character, urban form and historic cultural heritage.

In addition, the Project represents a significant net cost and will diminish the economic welfare of Tasmanians as a whole, and it offers almost no scope for the site to become a vibrant active place that is attractive to visit outside of major event mode.

In very simple terms, the stadium is far too big for the site and the benefits it will bring are significantly outweighed by the disbenefits it creates.

End of quote.

Given the clarity of that recommendation and its further detailed extrapolation in the panel's Integrated Assessment Report, the members of this Chamber were left to decide whether they accept that expert recommendation, whether they agree with the independent, eminently qualified panel members' conclusions.

The way I see it, based on that categorical conclusion from the TPC panel, there were two possible outcomes from this debate. One of them would cause guaranteed, irrevocable and an absolute end, and the other would provide myriad opportunities to pursue beneficial outcomes that we can all agree on.

If the order is voted down, in my view, nothing is permanently lost. There would remain possible pathways forward for all the claimed positive outcomes of the proposed stadium project. There are other stadium options that haven't yet been fully considered and even on cursory assessment would have far fewer of the economic and heritage issues of this Mac Point stadium proposed.

The future of the Devils team is a decision for the AFL and the Premier and, of course, much as bull-headed statements are made, it is fully within their power to continue the team under a renegotiated arrangement should they choose to do so. That option exists. I know that all members of parliament would certainly stand with the Premier to fight for our Devils through renegotiation.

We could generate greater economic benefit and jobs by the government instead investing the \$1 billion to 2 billion in other projects, others that have been appropriately prioritised, costed and planned. Virtually any other public infrastructure project would have a better benefit-to-cost ratio than this stadium.

A no vote, would have left us with options galore. However, contrast the other outcome, the one that we now can see is likely the one it will be. If this order goes through, the unique, cherished and highly valuable heritage waterfront precinct - the face of our capital city - will be permanently, irretrievably ruined. This is utterly the wrong way to irrevocably change the face of a capital city - the essence that makes it unique and cherished - the essence that draws visitors and sits at the centre of our valued brand.

Experts have said categorically that this stadium will permanently ruin the heritage character of our waterfront. This area is something for which we could readily be seeking World Heritage status. In fact, I know the City of Hobart is exploring that. It is the picture postcard view of our city that tourists love. It is a specific drawcard to our capital city because it isn't found anywhere else in the country.

Compounding the ruin of our heritage waterfront, this project would also irrevocably ruin the 100 years of protection for the respectfully and reverently planned Cenotaph precinct as a sacred area of remembrance. It would be a travesty to cast aside these fundamental, historic and precious aspects of our state's capital city through this case study of tainted governance, of corporate blackmail, of propaganda-driven populism, and which lacks the support of a majority of Tasmanians.

I will reflect on the planning process put in place for this project. In doing that, at the outset, we must acknowledge and thank former members, Lara Alexander and John Tucker. They were vilified and turned on during their time here and when they pushed through with this, but it is because of Mr Tucker and Mrs Alexander's principled stand that we are here.

Now, for the communities we each represent, we have the opportunity to be publicly scrutinising something that has such far-reaching ramifications for us all. They lobbied to ensure that should the stadium be declared a Project of State Significance, then any eventual order deriving from the assessment process must pass both Houses of parliament, which was not a requirement previously in all its circumstances.

The State Policies and Projects Amendment Bill 2023 amended the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* to require that a project of state significance that has been proposed by the state government needs to be approved by both Houses of parliament before any final approval order that would become effective. The bill passed both Houses of parliament and became an act on 31 August 2023. That is what I call a legacy to be proud of, for those two MPs. When members use their time here in the public interest to strengthen the democratic tools available for future MPs, by which they can use to protect the democratic rights of current and future Tasmanians, that is a democratic legacy to be proud of.

While some of us may be feeling that having to participate in this debate is one of the more stressful and difficult things that we have had to do, it is our privilege and our responsibility to do so, on behalf of those we represent who don't have such a platform by which their voices can be heard. We must be that for them.

While I stand by my public position that the parliament should not be used as a de facto planning entity, I recognise that in this instance, where that is the unfortunate case, then it is only right and proper that all elected representatives are given the opportunity to place clearly on the public record how and why they will be voting the way they do. So, thank you to former members, Lara Alexander and John Tucker.

With that as the background, last year the parliament voted for the stadium project to be assessed under the project of state significance process. The TPC was instructed to undertake its assessment of the stadium project, which led to 12 months of work by an independent expert panel appointed for the task.

First, because the POSS process sets aside the usual planning legislation and rules, a set of guidelines was developed against which an integrated assessment would be made. These guidelines were drafted, publicly consulted and finalised. The proponent provided the required project material and information for an initial assessment to be made and a draft integrated assessment report was produced. That draft IAR was put out for consultation and response. Three weeks of public hearings were then conducted by the panel in July of this year, where the government's arguments and that of other stakeholders and experts were tested publicly and transparently. Countless thousands of pages of evidence provided into this process are still available publicly and ensure that there is absolute accountability around the assessment made by the panel and upon which they provided their recommendation not to proceed.

The TPC report represents an exhaustive and authoritative assessment of the stadium and, quite frankly, it deserves nothing less than an honest and genuine response. However, the government's response document and the minister's statement of reasons are not the equivalent of an honest and genuine response to the TPC's IAR.

Section 26(7) of the *State Policies and Projects Act* does not prescribe that a minister who chooses to act contrary to the TPC recommendation must respond to the TPC's report or how; but the government has, I believe, a responsibility to properly respond, if for no other reason than to properly inform this parliament, including this Chamber, of its appropriate response to such a significant piece of work provided as advice.

The government had a responsibility to the parliament to provide an accurate, rigorous and comprehensive response to the TPC's integrated assessment report and recommendation report and that response should have identified each issue and finding, and perhaps counter arguments to it, if the government had them. It should have identified gaps if key matters were not reported on in the government's view, and it should have identified if the TPC had failed to deal fairly with evidence or witnesses put forward by the proponent.

But the government, of course, did nothing of the sort. Instead, it produced a glossy brochure called the *Macquarie Point Stadium Government Response* and there is simply no way that that could be regarded as a response at all. It has been noted to us that the government response report critically makes almost no specific mention of the TPC findings or recommendations. The bulk of the report totally ignores the TPC report. It is just, in main, a long list of every possible positive thing that they could say about the stadium. There's no evidence, though, that backs up most of those claims. It's just spin. There's not hard data in the government's response to back up the claims it makes, nor to refute the fundamental flaws identified as prohibitive of the project proceeding by the TPC panel.

As one person put it to me in an email about the government's very poor response, and I quote:

The TPC's Final Integrated Assessment Report (FIAR) concluded, upon consideration of all costs and benefits, that the disbenefits outweigh the benefits.

Yet the Government's meagre response has simply played up the benefits, particularly those that are conveniently unquantifiable, and used 'intangibles' to dismiss the quantifiable disbenefits as if they simply don't exist.

It then mixed all the benefits together in a publicity blurb that ignores or dismisses the TPC's year-long considerations and expertise completely.

This is NOT a proper response to a planning document.

Things are not made manifest, or spring fully formed from a few words on the pages of a glossy brochure.

Is this a standard you are willing to accept?

That's a damn good question for all of us here. My answer to that question is no. It is not the standard that I am willing to accept. But this government constantly disappoints and now, given the way that this outcome is going today on this order, I think that they have trained us all very well to fall into line and to accept such an abysmally low standard. It is one of the most unedifying and disrespectful things I think that we have seen in this whole affair, in terms of a government response, that being the disparagement of highly-qualified professionals. This seems to be becoming a habit for this government and particularly this Premier. It is political expediency and the very opposite of leadership. The Premier is actually sailing into Trumpian territory, I believe, and that is utterly unacceptable.

Let's be really clear: disparaging professionals for doing a job that your government has engaged them to do is the height of disrespect and oafishness. The TPC panel members are eminently qualified and experienced people, and one only has to take the time to look at the transcript of the hearing that members had with the TPC panel members just last week. At the beginning of that hearing for our benefit, they reintroduced themselves to us and described their professional expertise and the experience they had across the range of fields that they worked in.

I point people to that transcript, I believe it's pages 3 to 6 of the transcript where they're introducing themselves and providing that information about their professional expertise and qualifications. When anybody looks to that and hears those panel members describe what they brought to the table to make their integrated assessment of this project, anyone who then thought to turn around and disparage their capacity, to say unedifying, disrespectful things about their performance should be egregiously ashamed of themselves. This links to the government's notion of matters of opinion and choice, which is an expression that we've seen them use. It's in their government response in the foreword on page 3, and it's deeply disrespectful. This is what it says there in that government document:

The Tasmanian Planning Commission agrees that we can build this stadium at this site. It also found that we can manage pedestrian and vehicle traffic, we can manage the noise, and we can evacuate people safely. In the Government's view, what is left are matters of opinion and choice.

That's a shocking verballing of the panel in the first place. I refer to the quotes I provided earlier in my remarks about their actual findings; but I believe it's also highly disrespectful to dismiss what the panel assessed and stated in detail throughout the integrated assessment report as being merely matters of opinion and choice.

In the hearing that we had with the panel members last week, we tested that claim, that statement from the government in their response document. Here's some of the things that the

panel members had to say in response to that. First, on page 8 of the transcript from Mr Turner, he said this:

It's ultimately a matter of looking carefully at the evidence. In that regard, we think that we have considered and properly analysed the factual material as opposed to things which might be considered to be beyond that.

We were always concerned with empirical evidence. We were always interrogating ourselves about, 'What's the evidence for the proposition that's being advanced?' We consider, perhaps - I won't say immodestly, I think - that we have sifted through the materials, we have considered the facts; we have - using our respective areas of expertise and experience - analysed those things, and we have reached the conclusions, which could be said to be opinions, but they are ones which are valid and which have weight as opposed to the expression of a view which is not supported by empirical evidence.

Adding to that, Ms Penn, a panel member, went on to say this:

... I think Mr Turner has already talked about the evidence-based assessment that we undertook and that is absolutely the case. I hope our credentials stand for themselves in terms of our integrity and our independence and our standing, which is to do with providing honest advice based on the evidence. It's also to do with substantial experience in assessing these things.

Something I do is assess the quality of urban places and of infrastructure. That's not about numbers - two plus two equals four - it can be harder to assess. People sometimes think that's about opinion or subjectivity. It's not. There's a difference between taste and quality - if you don't mind me just talking about that - taste is 'I like this, you like that'. Some people like the Georgian sandstone of Salamanca and some people like Mona. They're both good - for different reasons - they've both got issues, but they're both good. Style, taste are always subjective and they're always valid. Someone likes pink, someone likes red, no problem.

Quality is about the combination of a whole range of factors: how well something works, is it fit for purpose, is it sustainable, enduring, can it be maintained, is it on budget, all those sorts of things that are part of project assessment; also, is it amenable, is it somewhere that people want to go - amenable, being comfortable - is it windy or is there access to sun and light. Is it comprehensively designed in a way that contributes to its place - so that it responds to its landscape, it's a good place to be, it's something that people will value, et cetera. They're all things that can be measured or judged. So they are objective. They are not subjective. I will defend that for every day of the week.

Despicably, the TPC panel members were accused of bias by some on the pro-stadium side of the argument. It is utterly unacceptable to impugn the professionalism and reputation of these individuals who were appointed as independent experts, based on their experience and their extensive expertise. The panel has been entirely transparent about their work. All evidence

taken by them is in the public domain. They've explained their work to us on the public record in the hearing.

As a demonstration of the attitude they brought to this, and as a demonstration of their professionalism, I looked to the transcript which has some summing up comments from the panel members. That's on pages 67 to 69 of that transcript, and I'm going to read a couple of them. It's to demonstrate their exceptional professional approach. First, panel member Mr Wallace said:

And maybe not directly addressing the question, but look, we came into this process without any preconceived ideas. What we've done is, we've tried to be as objective as possible dealing with the facts and not the emotion. We can't deal with the emotion. I, for one, want a team.

We've looked at everything. We've done it rigorously. We've taken a consistent approach on various things and we've formed a view and made a recommendation, to the best of our ability, on the facts that we have, and virtually all those facts came from the proponent.

Ms Penn said:

I absolutely reiterate that point. Certainly, no expression on the political aspects. I also think Tassie should have a team; it probably should have had the first team. But, I just wanted to make a comment that it is a legacy decision. I encourage the committee - and I'm sure you're more aware than I am, because you're making those decisions all the time - but it's a legacy that will, in economic terms, you will manage, government manages those decisions all the time, good or bad, whatever decision you make.

In terms of the built environment outcome and the spatial impact on the Cove and the identity and image and memory and understanding of what Hobart is as a place, and how it feels and how we experience it, my view is that there is a significant legacy impact that I urge you to consider.

Mr Prattley, who is also a panel member, at the hearing, said:

The only additional thing that I don't think we discussed at any length is what's happening to construction costs. Certainly, in Sydney, apartment developments around transit-oriented development sites are being approved and not being started. They cannot afford to build apartments at a price that people can afford to buy them. So, construction costs have got massive. I think during the course of our hearing there was a case of a development of a car sale site up on Macquarie Street for luxury apartments, which are approved that the developer walked away from, citing the 300 per cent increase in construction costs.

Ms Mason, also a panel member, said this:

Yes. Following up from Mr Prattley, you're making a 30- to 50-year decision here. I don't envy you at all because the unfortunate juxtaposition of a team

as opposed to a stadium with a roof right here, is an absolutely invidious choice to have to make.

I thought it's important for us to have heard from the panel members and put on the record here some of their statements from the many conversations we had with them at that hearing. In the face of quite disgraceful impugning of their professionalism, and suggestions of bias, and suggestions that they didn't have the capacity to do their work, I think we need to try to create a record that hasn't been created by the government, that hasn't been created by the media here - create a public record of their exceptional work, their exceptional professionalism, and the enormous tasks that they undertook, and the very clear advice that they provided to us, which was that we should not proceed with this project because of the highly irrevocable and detrimental influence it will have on our capital city.

The Premier has frequently trotted out the line that this project is the most scrutinised in our state's history and how fully scrutinised it has been. Quite frankly, that may well be true - but for that to be a meaningful statement in any way, we have to remind ourselves of the purpose of scrutiny of public decision-making. Primarily, it is to provide accountability to decision-making so that there can be transparency around how decisions are being made and an opportunity to judge to what extent it serves the public interest.

The most significant scrutiny of this project was the PoSS process itself, which was exhaustive and genuinely independent, expert, and arm's-length. That scrutiny delivered a categorical recommendation that the project not proceed.

The quantum or depth of scrutiny on any project is meaningless to refer to as a virtue if you, irresponsibly, ignore the most consequential scrutiny, which delivered a damning judgment that, for convenience, you're prepared to discard immediately.

It is exactly this kind of flippant sloganeering that makes Tasmanians despair at the deterioration of integrity in our governance and our democracy, and that effort is led by this Premier.

In fact, this slogan of being fully scrutinised is not actually the case. Not everything has been scrutinised. For example, the TPC expert panel did not scrutinise the order before us or the conditions it contains. How could they? They didn't have this final version. We went to the independent planning umpire and asked for their expert evidence-based assessment and recommendation. We received that and, instead of respecting the umpire's decision, we now have this order containing details and conditions that have not been put through the planning expertise scrutiny examination. That is irresponsible on so many levels. To ignore and flout the independent umpire is reckless. It's irresponsible, and no matter how many sweeteners you have swallowed to enable you to do so, it's distasteful.

Additionally, the TPC has not been provided the courtesy of examining new commitments that we've had dropped on us even here today. We are still left with a mountain of serious unresolved matters. Too many questions unanswered.

A message was shared with me recently from a community member and it said this. I'm going to quote it:

I write as a retired town planner and one-time expert member of RMPAT (now TASCAT) and an ex-planning commissioner.

I understand what is involved in decision-making on multifaceted and often complex development applications and I don't envy you the politics that has become part of this one!

I remind you though - ..., after all the politics and passion that has been attributed to the stadium, in the end, it is a decision on a building and its use and whether it is appropriate where it is being suggested. We have specific planning legislation enacted deliberately to provide a well regulated, thorough and professional assessment process. The Stadium was designated a Project of State Significance and a very well credentialed panel of 5 members was set up to assess it. They followed all correct procedures, read and listened to submissions and gave their very considered opinion - to reject the Stadium on many grounds - economic, social, environmental and heritage.

To not accept the Planning Commission Panel's advice is to make a decision on pure politics and populism.

The State government has done exactly that and in doing so, has tarnished the integrity and trust in its own planning system.

It would be further diminished should the Legislative Council follow suit and ignore all the expert advice and approve this ill considered project.

I would add one final reminder.

There was an endorsed and approved Master Plan for the Macquarie Point site, well underway, with Stage 1 (involving an apartment development) about to go for tender, before it was all thrown aside in favour of this Stadium.

It was not a useless undeveloped site with nothing happening on it.

There was another view that I was made aware of along some similar lines. The gist of it was, that the government's decision to disregard and disparage their own Planning Commission in favour of partisan assertions that, would make Chemist Warehouse ads for their latest anti-ageing cream sound believable says it all about this project. Further, they noted that the last time they had observed this sort of behaviour in this state was during the Gunns Pulp Mill saga. Like many others I've heard from, this person also noted the precedent that this will set for future decision-making around major state expenditure for the benefit of vested interests, and they rightly identified that as 'chilling'.

It is chilling, and here is what I thought was a very, very apt quote shared with me. It's this:

At the moment, the progress of the game is being decided by the players, their coaches and sponsors. There's a reason we have umpires.

There is indeed a reason. We are just far past the point of recognising their role in this circumstance.

And the Council having continued to sit after midnight -

THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER 2025

Ms WEBB - I'm going to go to the first of the TPC panel's reasons for recommending against this project: the economics of it. Predictably, we've seen boosterism catch cries of, 'We can't afford not to do it', and 'It will save our state', which is patently ridiculous, quite frankly, but has sadly been swallowed as spin by a huge number of regular Tasmanians who are hopeful and passionate about the team. This is classic cargo cult mentality and, quite frankly, in this state we have been there, done that and bought the T-shirt before, only to have it all prove a furphy.

This stadium is the latest in a line of messianic projects proposed in this state that are apparently going to save us, solve all our problems, and put our state on the map. Time after time, this has proven not to be true. Our history is littered with the detritus of failed external financial saviours who have rarely delivered. Cargo cult big business external saviours are usually, and fatally, inflated by hubris, but eventually crash like Icarus. It's always the ordinary Tasmanians who have to pick up the pieces; the state has always borne the cost.

This stadium folly is driven by, and inflated with, a similar hubris. It has all the hallmarks of a colonial cargo cult mentality yet again in our state. Apparently, the AFL is doing us all a huge favour for which we should fawn over them and be so grateful for. So grateful that they have cherry picked from our clearly incompetent and unworthy hands our most prime piece of valuable riverfront land at the beating heart of our city home, at the base of our proud Kunanyi/Mount Wellington and on the banks of our Timtumili Minanya/River Derwent. So grateful we should be that they will allow us to sink millions, if not billions, to be able to join their club by having a team which, as historic AFL supporters, Tasmania should always have been. Quite frankly, we should have been treated with respect, courtesy and honour as any equals seeking a common goal should be treated.

In the past, there are plenty of examples of this state rejecting inappropriate cargo cult propositions. Lo and behold, we still found our way forward and we still found plenty of other development opportunities for our state. In fact, Tasmanians are incredibly creative and entrepreneurial. We have a plethora of businesses and projects and events and experiences all over this state that are of, and by, and about Tasmania. They are the living, breathing expressions of our Tasmanian brand. The quiet pursuit of the extraordinary. We've spent millions as a state over years through Brand Tasmania exploring, identifying, describing and honing the brand of this unique state. We have even literally distilled it into a scent.

Brand Tasmania says that its mission is to inspire and encourage Tasmanians, and those who want to be Tasmanian, to quietly pursue the extraordinary. That is the literal antithesis of a cargo cult mentality. Cargo cult projects are what governments cling to when they've failed on the basics. When governments have presided over a downward spiral for our state, with debt growing and outcomes plummeting, cargo cult projects are flung up by government to distract us from their own failures. We have survived without cargo projects in the past. I'm thinking of examples like the Franklin Dam and the pulp mill, which didn't have to come to fruition. We

do not need this stadium to save us, and all credible assessment says that, in fact, it will do the opposite.

Having said that I do understand the concern and the assertion that our state is closed for business. There's some truth to that, but that doesn't mean we should accept a project if it's not a good one and if it's not the right one. In this case, that has proven to be exactly what this project is. It's not the right one, and it's certainly not a good one.

One of the false equivalences that has been part of the spin and propaganda surrounding this project is that this stadium is infrastructure the government should invest in, just like a bridge, school or hospital. This is quite simply incorrect. A stadium, even a multipurpose one, isn't a bridge, a school or a hospital. It isn't a public good. In answer to a question on this at the hearing last week, the TPC panel member Mr Wallace said the following:

This isn't social infrastructure. The reason is because, if you look at the social costs and benefits, there is a net social cost, so it's not justified on social infrastructure terms.

The other thing is that the stadium benefits a subsection of the community, but the whole community pays for it. ... What happens is, a subsection of the community gets a net social benefit. The benefit to them is greater than the cost to them, but the rest of the community has a large social cost. That's why collectively it's negative, but importantly, there's a huge redistribution effect here within the economy.

Another economic aspect that is conveniently ignored by the boosters of this stadium is the opportunity cost. If we decide that we have \$1 billion to \$2 billion of public funding to spend on something in the infrastructure space, what would our priorities be? We would have to ask ourselves two key questions: what are our prioritised areas of need, and what are our prioritised outcomes that we want to achieve? Then we would have a process of assessing and weighing up the best use of that investment of public money. I can guarantee you, point blank, if we undertook that kind of responsible, accountable decision-making process and we had that \$1 billion to \$2 billion of infrastructure money to invest, we would not choose to spend this money on this stadium project. Why? Because we would have better options that would deliver more jobs, more direct positive outcomes for the community, more equitable outcomes, meet the more urgent needs that we're experiencing, and deliver higher and more enduring returns for the public investment. As an email writer put it to me in recent days, the proposed Mac Point Stadium is a very poor use of scarce resources in this state.

There are some very loud, influential voices acting as boosters for this project because it is their industries and their businesses that will benefit from it most directly. That is entirely understandable. It is rational for a business or industry representative to act to promote their interests. But, for a government, the public interest must be their foremost priority. Spending significant public money to benefit very limited businesses in a limited part of the state is not responsible allocation of our very limited public resources. Not when there is no evidence of a proper process of assessing competing priorities and needs, weighing well-considered proposals against each other, and arriving on a preferred option that is best indicated by evidence as the best use of public money for public purpose.

Another matter to consider in the economic space is our current circumstances, which we know have just gotten worse. We know that we've had our credit rating for the state downgraded by Moody and S&P Global Ratings, with the capital costs and increasing debt prompting the reassessment and the stadium project and the risk of cost overruns being cited as concerns in some of that decision. We will now, as a result of that credit rating downgrade, pay more for our debt. We will spend more on our interest and that is a direct impact on the money that we will have available for government-delivered services. It's really important, and I know other members have pointed to this, too, very eloquently. This is not just infrastructure spending when we're going into debt for all of it. In fact, we will be going further into debt to pay the interest on the debt. So, we are in dire straits when a credit rating downgrade means we will be paying more. Every bit more we pay comes away, then, from something else that the government needs to provide services for. The benefits of this project haven't changed, but just in this past week, the costs have increased and the state's ability to absorb those costs has deteriorated.

In the transcript from the hearing last week, there was an exchange where Ms Thomas put a question to Mr Wallace and it went like this. She said, with some preamble:

... because there's no spare money to pay for the interest on the loans each year, and because the government doesn't have any new revenue streams proposed to pay for that interest, the government will have to take money from other areas. So we will have to cut spending in other areas in order to pay that interest, to cover the interest on the loan, or borrow to pay the borrowings.

Mr Wallace replies:

Yes, that's right. It has to be funded because to have the compound interest trap that I've explained to happen, is completely untenable - it's amazing how quickly that compound interest trap works.

This is what the economic modelling that people like KPMG, et cetera, do. They assume that governments have to be rational. They have to deal with this problem by funding it. ... So, you take the loan out for - it's a bit like the Hydro scheme - you take the loan out to get it built, but in the case of a hydro scheme, then you get the revenue during the operational period to pay the interest, if not to pay down the debt.

In this case you don't have that, so you have to find some other mechanism and the other mechanisms are - and I'm not giving financial advice to the government - but they're just obvious: tax increases; abandonment of future capital projects or future projects; reductions in spending; or a combination of all those.

That is what is ahead of us, Mr President - what I heard another member refer to in a contribution as 'stadium austerity'. I know some of this has been gone over by other members, but I'm putting it on the public record as part of my contribution too, because it's significant.

If this order goes through, and it appears that it will, this is what we're signing up for. This is what every member's choice is leading us to. In the hearing, panel member, Mr Wallace,

was asked about the interest cost on the now \$1.13 billion project, noting that the interest rate is now up to 6.4 per cent, and he provided his estimation. He said this:

... \$70 million a year, except you've got to borrow the interest as well.

The reason for why you have to borrow that much and why you have to borrow the interest is because the state has an underlying significant cash deficit for the foreseeable future - without the stadium - so any cash that adds to that has to be borrowed, so all interest payments have to be borrowed.

For example, the first year you're paying \$70 million. The second year, you're borrowing another \$70 million. The interest on that first \$70 million is at 6.4 per cent, so roughly \$4 million to \$5 million, so next year you're borrowing \$74 million. The following year, you're borrowing \$80 million, so within about five years you're going to get a debt associated with the stadium of, say, \$1.5 billion, not \$1.1 billion, and the interest costs at that stage will be \$90 million a year.

It's a completely untenable situation.

It's important to understand that loan borrowing is a financing thing, but we have to assume, as KPMG does in its economic modelling, that governments act rationally. It's a completely untenable situation.

The stadium has to be funded either through tax increases, the abandonment of future capital projects or reduction in spending in some sort of way.

Further along he says:

The economic modelling used by KPMG and everybody else in the world uses a balanced budget constraint because it knows that such a situation is untenable, so taxes have to increase. This is where I think the biggest confusion is here. People don't understand that when the government borrows money and spends it, they think it creates an economic uplift, but it doesn't. It's public money; it's not private investment. It's public money, it has to be funded, so you are withdrawing money from the economy to pay for it.

We have to look at the impact over the whole life of the stadium, including the construction and the operation. When you look at the whole lot, effectively that initial effect of government borrowing before they start to fund it and spending the money will create like a sugar hit-effect, but the economic activity after that will go down, because it has to be funded.

Something I noted in reading the integrated assessment report was the comment contrasting the approach that we're taking here with our stadium, in terms of the proportion of public funding to be provided to the project, and how that contrasts with other jurisdictions. I noticed that the integrated assessment report on page 50 in paragraph (d) said this:

While stadiums have been financially supported by public funding elsewhere in Australia and overseas, a difference here is the extent of the public funding

required, (given the absence of any private investment) relative to Tasmania's small population, economic and taxation base. The Project results in a substantial cost burden on the Tasmanian community relative to the benefits the community receives.

In the hearing with the TPC panel members, Mr Wallace was asked to elaborate on that. Here's some of what he said:

... this would be a different proposition, of course, if it was a private investment, which is new money coming into the state creating activity. It's publicly funded, so it's transferred effectively from taxpayers to build the stadium. I think the main point being made here - I'm trying to think of an example - so, Adelaide Oval -

and then he goes on:

The point is that at Adelaide Oval, there are two AFL teams, there are 50,000 people who go every week for the whole year, and that cost - which say, if it was built now, may be equivalent to this cost - there's a basic fixed cost, so you can add extra capacity, but it doesn't change the cost much. The budget base of the South Australian Government is three times that of Tasmania, but you're effectively building something with the same cost but not getting anywhere near the same activity or revenue. That's the main point being made there.

It's a major public commitment for something - and I know all governments do it - that is effectively a commercial activity. It's a highly competitive national market to attract events and things like that. We have a small population in Tasmania, but importantly, we have a very narrow tax base. We have 30 per cent of Tasmanian households that effectively depend on Commonwealth income support, so the available money that the state can use as public money for assets like this is much lower than what other states might be able to do, notwithstanding the fact - even if we had the same population, the sociodemographic profile of Tasmania is another thing which is contriving against this.

It actually represents for Tasmanians a very substantial cost burden, much bigger than anywhere else in Australia relative to the benefits received. Sure, there are benefits, but they are very small. KPMG's estimate of an increase of \$27 million in GSP ... the error range is much greater than \$27 million. Sure, there are benefits, but they are very small compared to the cost, and the cost for Tasmania is relatively much larger than any other major capital in Australia.

That's quite categorical: a good explanation as to why we can't compare ourselves to what's happening in Adelaide or in Perth. There are many reasons we can't, but that's an important economic one. We are simply a different jurisdiction. We have different circumstances, we have different resources, and we have different demographics. The cost is higher for us here; the benefits are less.

Virtually as soon as the TPC panel's integrated assessment report was publicly released in September, the Premier, his government, and various other pro-stadium MPs began casting aspersions on the economic assessment made by the panel which led them to their benefit-to-cost ratio of 0.45. Now, what is very clear in the integrated assessment report is that the panel used the proponent's numbers to make their calculations of cost-benefit ratio. Where they didn't, they explained why they hadn't, and they pointed to the fact that it wouldn't have made much difference.

Given that I believe we would all accept that project proponents, whoever they would be, would routinely be more likely to overstate the benefits of their projects, what we can almost certainly assume is that the calculation is likely to be more favourable than it should be in reality by using the proponent's numbers. In light of the all-but-professional character assassination of the TPC panel in the government's commentary on their IAR, it was certainly important that we had the opportunity to discuss their work in more detail last week.

I go again to some parts from the transcript of that hearing. Mr Wallace said this about the cost-benefit analysis that was done:

We did a cost-benefit analysis. The metrics we used were the social cost-benefit analysis, the general equilibrium economic modelling - they're complementary measures. We then looked at other metrics of value for money or affordability, and we did our own rigorous assessment of all the information that the government had given us about the costs and benefits ...

In case there's any doubt, this is entirely appropriate and credible, and the work was done by eminently credible professionals. Let's be very clear about that. Assertions were made that the panel massively undervalued social benefits and other tangible benefits. The government made it sound like the TPC didn't consider difficult to measure so-called unquantifiable social impacts. For example, these are some of the things that the government was asserting:

- the Premier, in a media release on 17 September the day the report was released, said this in the media release, 'the report massively underestimates the social and economic benefits of the stadium'.
- then the minister in a media release on 8 October 2025 said the government has responded by, 'outlining the stadium's unquantifiable benefits'.

I don't think so. They didn't actually try to do that in an accurate or measurable way.

- the government's response on page 18 says, in response to the cost-benefit ratio, that it just means, 'The project's quantifiable benefits are less than its quantifiable costs'.
- the minister's Statement of Reasons on page 5 says, 'Social benefits are difficult to quantify in dollar terms and many fall outside the scope of the commission's project of state significance assessment process and final report.'

The minister, though, provides no example there in that statement of reasons of that assertion.

We can look to see what the TPC actually said about the difficult-to-measure social impacts. That's what the government said about it. Those are the assertions the government made. But we can look at the TPC report, and we can see that it states at section 1.3:

- (m) The BCR of 0.45 in Table 1.2 adopts the KPMG estimates of social benefits which does not include any estimate of social cost. While it is argued that there are other social benefits that are not included as they cannot be easily quantified, there are clearly also social costs, and these have not been included in the CBA.

The social and cultural benefits are listed at 1.3(d) and (f). The value given to some social values is questioned and it highlights the need for continued investment to sustain them. I assume that this refers to maintaining increased sport participation or team pride when excitement levels diminish, for example.

At section 1.3(h) of the TPC report, it asserts that social benefits can also be social costs.

At 1.3(j), the TPC report contradicts KPMG's decision not to include certain social costs because they were temporary or mitigated. The TPC found some social costs are neither temporary nor able to be fully mitigated.

The TPC were open, were clear, were honest about how they treated social costs and benefits. To have the government suggest somehow that they'd egregiously missed things out in their assessment, when they've told us as well their assessment is based on the information and numbers provided by the government, is utterly unacceptable. Yet another impugning of highly professional and credentialed people.

Further questions were put to Mr Wallace on this about whether the panel had massively underestimated the social and economic benefits of the project, as suggested by the government. I refer to his comments in the transcript. He said this:

In my view, no. We did a very comprehensive assessment of all the information we received, particularly from KPMG, who did a very good report on all the social and cultural benefits associated with the stadium. Even though our - we received some advice that they seemed very optimistic, we actually used the estimates that they provided in our cost-benefit analysis. If you look at their social and cultural impact analysis, you will see a list of things which actually then end up as summary items in the cost-benefit analysis.

At the public hearings, this issue was raised about these 'other' benefits or costs. KPMG noted a couple: one of them I think was 'liveability' and the other one was 'brand'; actually, some of that's already in there. One of the issues with those things is not just their measurement, but they're both social negatives as well. It's quite clear that there is a negative brand impact as well as potentially a positive brand impact. It is also very clear that there are negative impacts on liveability, because of traffic congestion and many other things, as well as positive.

Further he said:

In my view there is nothing material that would make really any difference of any materiality on the results we got. There's nothing there.

Mr Wallace was asked to comment on the generated business activity that it is claimed will occur and whether that was being counted in the assessment. He said this.

The reason these benefits are very small, of course, is because it's not the borrowing of the money and the spending of the money in construction that creates the benefit over the period. It's only three things.

- it's the AFL investment in Tasmania, or what they claim that they'll invest;
- it's the interstate visitation, so people who will come to Tasmania, who didn't previously come, to attend an event at the Hobart stadium, and how long they will stay and how much they will spend; and
- it's the retained visitation, the assumption that 32,000 Tasmanians won't travel to an event on the mainland because we have a stadium here, so they'll spend their money here.

They're the three things. They're not unimportant, but relatively they're very small bickies when you look at the size of the economy and the size of tourism, et cetera.

When asked further, about the economic benefit of a new hotel that may be built in response to the stadium project because, 'Oh, the benefits, the benefits,' Mr Wallace said:

That's what a computable general equilibrium model does. What it does is has the dynamic impacts on the economy, so it takes into account - so what's the flow-on effect of this increased visitation in terms of investment, hotel rooms, et cetera - that's already in the modelling. It's not very large, because the numbers of interstate visitors isn't very large.

Further, he said:

That's why we looked at several different metrics. As KPMG says, the economic modelling is complementary to the cost-benefit analysis. The cost-benefit analysis says, 'Here are the costs, here are the benefits', and it's a static concept. That's very important. If the ratio had been much higher, you'd say, 'Look at these other things that we haven't taken into account,' but it's very, very low, of course. We looked at the economic modelling to see what sort of flow-on, what other economic activity might happen. It's not all in addition

to the cost-benefit analysis but it gives you a different perspective, and that's very low as well.

Again he said:

The number for the value of interstate visitation is a static concept saying here's how much money is being spent and here's the economic value of it. In any economy there's a dynamic flow-on effect that's nowhere near as large as the initial effect. What you're saying is true, but it's a minor addition. All these tools have some sort of limitation, so we tried to address those limitations.

The biggest one about cost-benefit analysis is the use of discount rate. We tried a range of discount rates and you still get the same very low result. In this case, if we were able to do that and add a little bit of extra dynamic effect to the economy, you'd still get a very low benefit-cost ratio.

And finally:

It's a globally accepted way of doing it. The limitations are well understood. You try to do it in a way where you do various metrics - all the metrics show a fail; that's the problem in this case.

I got into quite a bit of detail there to make it really clear that the assessment done by the TPC panel on the economics of this stack up. That the accusations that were made by the Premier of them failing to do this job properly, don't stack up. The fact that the Premier made those in the public domain, that the media amplified them and boosted them further and gave them credibility unquestioningly, is actually quite disgraceful.

Yet we still keep seeing people making completely unfounded boosterism claims about the benefits of this stadium. Just last week, after coming in to give us a briefing, Brendan Gale rushed out to the media to tell them all about how there would be a \$2 billion uplift to the state's economy from this stadium.

Fortunately, we were able to also ask about that in our hearing with the panel members. Mr Wallace, who was the economic expert on the panel, when asked about this apparent \$2 billion uplift that the state may get, said this:

What we've used is the government estimates, KPMG's estimates, and revised information from Stadiums Tasmania about their revenues and costs, so where this information comes from, I don't know. However, on the basis of the information we got, no. That is just a completely new, big number.

I think, again, there is a confusion here. A total amount of money does not measure economic uplift. Total spending doesn't measure that. The value is, as I said before, the value added - economists refer to it as producer, labour and consumer surplus - this is well-established economic theory and practice. You've got to do it that way. You can't just say, 'Oh, all this money is being spent'.

What we've got to assess is, to what extent does the construction and operation of the stadium increase Tasmania's economy above what it would have been? That is what we are measuring.

The kind of baseless and wildly exaggerated claims made by Mr Gale last week are a prime example of the shameless boosterism and propaganda surrounding this project. That then gets ecstatically reported in a salivating media and, most sadly of all, it becomes believed as truth by hopeful, excited, passionate Tasmanian community members who just want the team.

To summarise this economic section of my contribution, we are deeply in debt and already borrowing to pay for operational expenses. Interest payments we make on this additional debt will redirect money that would otherwise be available for government services. Even though this is an infrastructure build, that's how it will affect our operational funding for services.

As has been alluded to by others, most spending generated by this stadium is transferred spending from locals - that's indisputable - which means it doesn't contribute anything to growth. The vast majority of the events to be held at the stadium - and I will talk more about it later - will be transferred events from other local venues. Again, indisputable, and not contributing anything to growth.

However, this will potentially adversely affect other businesses, of course. It does beg the question about the appropriateness of a government-funded enterprise competing in the marketplace where it will be potentially dominant and undermine other private sector enterprises competing for the same business.

Claims that the stadium will be an economic saviour for our state are patently false and not backed by any evidence. Anywhere we, as a state, choose to spend \$1 billion to \$2 billion would generate economic activity in our state, and its economic benefit would be able to be quantified through a credible cost-benefit analysis. I will leave the economic area at that and move on to the next area of concern and categorical assessment from the panel.

It is a natural pause point, Mr President, and I wonder whether - I test the room. It's 12.30. It's five hours since we came back from our dinner break. I will test the room.

Mr President, I move -

That the debate be adjourned and my contribution resumed in the morning.

[12.34 a.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I'm inclined - I mean, we will see what other members think, and this is a debate that always is determined by the will of the Chamber, and I'm interested to hear what other members in the Chamber are feeling about this at the moment.

Personally, I'm inclined to keep going. I know it's late. It's been a long day. We have another long day ahead of us tomorrow. My concern is that we won't get through what we need to get through tomorrow, or we will be here again very late tomorrow night.

My inclination, at the moment, is to not support the adjournment. I know it's not ideal. None of us enjoy being here this late, but we have important work to do and we don't do this often. It's not that we sit at this hour of the night very frequently, so given what we're debating and the community interest and the amount of work we still have to get through tomorrow, which could take us all day again, I would be keen to keep going.

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I think we should pull the pin, mainly because staff are here. We're not sure how long it's going to take tomorrow. It could be quicker than we think. It's 12.30 a.m. By the time some people travel home and get to bed, it will be 1.30 a.m. before they're asleep, then they have to be back up in five hours. I'd rather risk going for another late night tomorrow night. I would prefer to finish.

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, it's been a very long day for everyone and quite a stressful and emotional day for some of us. I understand the desire to finish the speeches before we debate the order or deal with the order tomorrow, but is there any reason, for example, why the Council couldn't start a bit earlier tomorrow, potentially because as the member for Mersey said, I'm more concerned for the staff in here and the people who have no choice, unlike us, about whether or not they stay here potentially for another couple of hours. Is that correct?

Ms Webb - Yes, easy.

Ms O'CONNOR - I believe it would be respectful to the staff if we could adjourn tonight and potentially start a little bit earlier tomorrow when our brains are functioning better and we're probably all in slightly better spirits.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I'm at the will of the House as well, so I'm happy to take the vote. Certainly, my preference would be that we finish the speeches, which was my intention all the way through. Everyone's entitled to have the length of speech that they have and there is no issue with that, but we have no idea of what tomorrow is going to bring. There are many items and conditions, so if we could keep going, finish these tonight, or today, then we at least have a fresh start for the Committee stage tomorrow.

Obviously, I'm at the will of the House, Mr President, as always.

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I share the Leader and the member for Rumney's view. I'd really like to get this bit finished tonight. There's a lot of detail in the order. The reason I moved that motion in the first place was to give us plenty of time to pull that apart and get the answers to questions that are needed. For members to have to stay very late tomorrow night, and staff as well - if we're here very late tomorrow night, staff will be, too - I acknowledge it's a challenge.

These days we don't do this very often, thankfully. Back in the old days, however, we used to do it a lot. That didn't make it a good thing to do, I can assure you of that. However, this is a one-off. It's an important matter. I know people are tired, but, in my view, let's finish this part of it because there is a lot of work to do tomorrow.

I take the member for Mersey's point. We don't know how long it's going to take, but we often think that it might not take that long, and there we are, things hangover for weeks. Anyway, that's my view; other people have different views.

Motion negatived.

[12.39 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I will move on to the next aspect established by the TPC Panel as a basis for recommending that the stadium process not proceed, which is heritage.

In conducting the integrated assessment of this project, 'The Commission must seek to further the objectives in Schedule 1 of the *State Policies and Procedures Act*.' One of those objectives is to provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water.

The commission concluded the project is not fair as it will extensively and irreparably damage the historic cultural heritage of the heritage-listed buildings in Hunter Street, the Engineers Building, and most particularly, the Cenotaph. The panel has concluded that the adverse effects are unacceptable.

It's interesting when you read the TPC panel's Integrated Assessment Report. It's incredibly clearly written and it's incredibly accessible to read, in that it doesn't use long-winded expressions or much curly language. It states things very plainly and, in fact, in some ways to its detriment, perhaps, it states things in what we might think of as fairly mild language.

When the panel concludes that the adverse effects are 'unacceptable', that doesn't necessarily sound too bad. That sounds like something maybe we can tolerate and that isn't a big deal. Something's 'unacceptable' - lots of things are unacceptable. Sometimes, the quality of my sandwich at lunch is 'unacceptable'. When we spoke to the panel last week at the hearing, it became clearer that it would be a mistake to read the language used by the panel and downgrade it into more mildness. When we read a statement such as this, that the panel has concluded that 'the adverse effects are unacceptable', we should take that to be an absolutely categorical statement as it should not be accepted. 'It's unacceptable; you should not accept it,' is what they are telling us.

They identified that it is not possible to offset the impacts on these historic places and, thus, it is not a fair project according to the act. Given that the project is not fair, it can be inferred that the project contravenes the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* due to its impact on historic places, as it fails to further the objectives of the act.

The panel found the project would adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole, and the experience of it by the Tasmanian community and visitors. Sullivans Cove is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity. It's an important part of Tasmania's brand, which, according to the commission, will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts. 'Unacceptably diminished' - we shouldn't accept it.

What we are talking about here, quite frankly and plainly, is permanently ruining the heritage character of our capital city. It puts me in mind of a relevant comparable situation to what is proposed here, being that time of the green bans in Sydney in the 1970s, when residents

who were appalled at the bulldozing of historic urban and green areas of the city and were not being listened to by political decision-makers turned to the Builders Labourers Federation, the BLF, for help.

BLF workers could actually have benefitted from the work on construction sites where heritage buildings were being bulldozed, but, led by people like the champion Jack Munday and others, they developed a new concept of unionism, arguing that workers had the right to insist that their labour couldn't be used in harmful ways. They blocked work on sites and projects that would destroy valued and unique heritage for Sydney, and by doing that, they saved them. The value that the historic precinct of The Rocks, for example, which got saved by the green bans in Sydney - the value that adds to the city is incalculable today. With that proud union and labour movement history, it's even more shameful that the Labor Party in this state is supine in the face of this government juggernaut of dodgy governance.

It is also disappointing that the union movement has fallen into line behind a project that will see massive public investment, direct economic benefits to limited private interests and out of the state, while delivering minimal growth in GSP and significantly greater debt levels for our state, which will need to be paid for by the shedding of public sector jobs in the thousands. Additionally, the union movement in supporting this project is endorsing the permanent vandalism of the heritage and character of our capital city.

If the government has \$1 billion to \$2 billion of public money to invest in infrastructure, the union movement can surely recognise that such projects only deserve its support if they provide opportunities for jobs and job security, and also deliver positive public benefit through increased GSP and are not fundamentally harmful to the public interest and unique valuable public spaces.

Where is our Tasmanian Jack Munday on this from the Tasmanian Labor Party or the union movement? Where is our Jack Munday? Jack Munday, himself, to loop it back to a local circumstance - acknowledged our local heroes of heritage right here in Hobart as an inspiration for his green bans to save The Rocks. He lauded the Battery Point Community Association, which in 1968, through its activism, saved our now iconic Salamanca Place warehouses, which were flagged for demolition. Through the activism and passion of the Battery Point group they were saved for their heritage value. That went on to inspire the green bans and the saving of The Rocks and other important places in Sydney, which are valuable similarly to Hobart for their colonial heritage infrastructure and buildings. That should be a salutary lesson for us here.

As I've already mentioned, the TPC panel also concluded that the project will adversely affect the general character of Sullivans Cove as a whole and the experience of it by the Tasmanian community and visitors. Sullivans Cove is fundamental to Hobart's spatial character and identity and an important part of Tasmania's brand, which, according to the commission, will be unacceptably diminished by the stadium's presence and impacts. Just a reminder, 'unacceptably', we shouldn't accept it.

The commission concluded the form and scale of the project repudiates longstanding planning principles and strategies that have applied to Sullivans Cove for decades and are still relevant. The planning principles and strategies were deemed to be relevant to the commission's consideration of the environmental, social, economic and community impacts of the project as part of its integrated assessment. Evidence of the current relevance of these longstanding planning principles and strategies is in the fact that they have been incorporated into the

statewide Tasmanian Planning Scheme through the Hobart City Council's Local Provisions Schedule. That is Hobart's new planning scheme, which was signed off on 22 October 2025, just a couple of weeks ago. While these principles to protect Sullivans Cove may have been developed some decades ago, they have since been retained and increased in importance in our planning scheme.

In the hearing with the panel, Mr Prattley, when asked about the use of Sullivans Cove planning principles in the assessment, made some comments about that. I might state here on the record, in case people don't read about Mr Prattley and his history and professional expertise in the record of the hearing, that Mr Prattley has 58 years of professional expertise in the planning area. He's held esteemed positions in three states, including Tasmania. He was on our Planning Commission or the equivalent body when the Sullivans Cove planning schemes were being put in place. They were put in place because the heritage of our waterfront was being wrecked with unsuitable developments and it was recognised that we needed to step in to protect it. If we were still following the Sullivans Cove planning principles that were put in place, then we wouldn't be doing what we appear to be doing here today.

In the hearing with the panel, Mr Prattley talked about the Sullivans Cove planning principles, and he noted this:

While we don't have to follow the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme as such, the principles have not changed. If anything, they've been reinforced. The work that Hobart City Council has done on looking at the CBD and the stepping up of buildings and location of tall buildings versus lower buildings on the topography all reinforce all the principles that underpinned the Sullivans Cove Planning Review. I think, from my point of view, there are none of those that are not still relevant. I'd suggest that they're of more importance perhaps than they used to be.

Later in the hearing, Ms Penn, followed up with this comment:

... the planning provisions are, as Mr Prattley said, a point in time. They are constantly being nuanced: how can we make planning better, how can we make it easier to navigate, how can we still protect what we want to protect? But what is constant and has grown and developed has been this recognition of, and commitment to, what is special about Hobart and Sullivans Cove

This gives the lie to the statements on page 44 of the government's response to the IAR, which suggests that we have moved on from the vision of the Sullivans Cove planning review. That is blatantly wrong. We have further embedded those self-same principles of that review into our planning system.

As many people have asked in their communications with me on this matter, what is the point of having a strategic planning system if the parliament votes against the system? The planning experts found that on the matter of destruction of heritage, there is nothing that can be done to ameliorate the impact of the project. There is nothing that can be done to make this project consistent with the objectives of our planning system.

This is a rule of law system and these laws should apply, and they should apply to everyone. Approving this order sends a clear message that our planning system rules don't

matter. When you're a special government project, you can ride roughshod right over them in the face of expert, independent advice.

While we're talking about the desecration of our precious heritage on the waterfront in this, the capital city of our state, intrinsically connected to our whole brand, I want to take a moment to talk about the visual presentation of the stadium complex.

The commission concluded the stadium, including its roof - through its size, scale and form - will irrevocably damage and overwhelm the landscape and the urban pattern of Hobart, impacting how it is appreciated and understood. It points out that:

- from the sea level to the foothills of Kunanyi, Hobart is a natural amphitheatre with Sullivans Cove at its centre.
- according to the commission, the project will irrevocably change the way the community understands and appreciates the landscape and urban pattern of Hobart.
- the stadium, described as a 'large, bulky monolith,' would dominate the landscape and surrounding historic buildings and diminish the prominence of the Domain headland, which is what the Cenotaph sits on.
- it will create 'hill' on the cover floor which confuses the natural topography.

The roof is an example of what I regard, as a purposeful mistruth by the government and the media:

- it is constantly portrayed as transparent - it was referred to that way in the Leader's contribution today - and in every image made public and pictured in the newspaper or the media, the roof looks like clear glass.
- you can also see it in the long views that we were presented with from the Cenotaph area where it's shown as transparent, so much so that you can see through it to the Mt Nelson ridge line behind it. That will not be the case.
- It will be opaque. It will look solid - translucent, at best.
- the purpose of this deliberate misrepresentation to the public is to pretend the massive edifice that is the stadium will be less dominantly obstructive than it actually will be.

In last week's hearing with the panel, the appearance of the roof was discussed. Responding to questions on the appearance of the roof and whether it will be transparent as depicted in most images from the proponent, Ms Penn provided the following comments:

ETFE (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene) is not transparent. It's translucent at best and it reflects light. Based on other ETFE roofs I've seen, it's much more likely to be reflective and will not be transparent. I don't think it will be possible, in my professional opinion. Maybe there will be something about the circumstance about the light that means I'm wrong, but I'm just saying that a more qualified opinion is that you won't be able to see through it at all.

Further on the same page of the transcript, she said:

Regardless, our assessment is that that roof will certainly not be transparent and really won't be translucent either. And yes, it adds significantly to the perceived bulk for a couple of reasons: one is because you can't see through it, but two is because of its singularity and size. So its dimensional size is just an empirical number, then the fact that it's homogeneous, it's one single element, in the contrast of the much more broken up scale and variation of all the urban elements around it, means that its perceived size is much bigger.

Something I'm intensely concerned about is that Tasmanians, especially Hobartians, are going to get a horrifically rude shock when the reality of the appearance of the stadium, especially the roof, becomes a reality - a reality that is strikingly more monolithic and brutal than has been depicted in all promotions to date. It goes without saying that, by the time we get that horrifically rude shock, it will be too late because of the decision we've made here today.

I want to move on promoting my concerns about the public's misperceptions about what the appearance of the stadium will be, talking about the Cenotaph.

It is worth considering the stark differences in approach taken to respecting and involving the community when it comes to the closely linked site of the Hobart Cenotaph and the AFL-demanded stadium. Our Cenotaph is the first capital city war memorial, nationally. It has national significance. We are just 10 days shy - in fact, given the time, nine days shy - of the original unveiling of the Hobart Cenotaph, which occurred on 13 December 1925. Many Tasmanians have a personal connection to this Cenotaph.

I mention, as an example of how close people's connections to the Cenotaph can be, that the previous member for Hobart, Mr Rob Valentine - who is with us in the Chamber today in solidarity - his great grandfather, Francis David Valentine, was an officiating dignitary at the opening of the Cenotaph on 13 December in 1925 in his role as the mayor of Hobart at the time. When I think about that, and all the other personal connections that many Tasmanians have with the Cenotaph, Madam Deputy President - in fact, you mentioned your own in your contribution earlier today with members of your family who had been away to serve and some of whom didn't come back - the Cenotaph is special for many of us. I imagine, with quite some sadness, how our forebears would feel today about the decision we're making about the irrevocable harm to the Cenotaph, especially as, in the early 1900s, they deliberately chose that particular site on the Domain headland for significant reasons.

At the time, this is how it went: the community was consulted over the site. It was carefully reviewed, selected and finalised because it met the cultural, spiritual and sightline criteria - of which we have had thoughtful briefings during our preparations for today.

As someone who has been privileged to attend remembrance ceremonies at the Hobart Cenotaph representing the electorate of Nelson, I have always appreciated the foresight of those Hobartians and broader Tasmanians for their conscientious and community-orientated deliberations in arriving at and designing the site. I felt deep gratitude for that foresight as I've stood there in the gentle breeze - sometimes icy cold wind - and listened to the shifting of the horses' hooves of the Light Brigade and the dawn bugle of Anzac Day, and the solemn minute of silence, for example, on Remembrance Day.

Ironically and sadly, this site, dedicated to reminding us all of 'lest we forget', is the very site it appears we are at risk of forgetting the community effort and goals to secure a permanent and respectful location dedicated to community loss, sacrifice and remembrance.

Every element of the setting of our Cenotaph is meaningful and largely unchanged in its essence and sacred properties for over 100 years. It has deep meaning for all Tasmanians. This was the place families came, and continue to come, to grieve. It was built as the Cenotaph for Tasmania - the state, the whole state - as a place of significance in our capital city, in a place of honour in that city. It represents intangible heritage, the essence of a place and the feeling it generates. That essence reinforces a sense of connection and identity.

Visual prominence of the Cenotaph in its precinct is intrinsic to its value. Important sightlines to the cove, to St George's Church, and the river are part of the Cenotaph commemorative language. Blocking the sightlines is not just changing a view; it is ruining the essence and sacredness of the place. It's trampling on the careful, community-driven hopes, and careful planning of the citizens of Hobart 100 years ago who had the foresight and the vision to create a place of honour and remembrance for all eternity - or so they thought.

The Sullivans Cove planning scheme is very clear on the protection of the Cenotaph. This stadium is not just a minor intrusion into the sense of place; it is the obliterating monolith right up close and overbearing it through both its proximity and its height.

In the Integrated Assessment Report, on pages 80 to 81, paragraph (e) says:

The built form of the stadium will have a significant detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the Cenotaph and the way it is understood and experienced.

In paragraph (g):

Both the proposed built form and the use of the stadium building will have a significant detrimental effect on the historical cultural heritage and community values of the Cenotaph.

However, page 58 of the government's response to the Integrated Assessment Report, says this:

[It] acknowledges that the stadium development will have an indirect impact on the Cenotaph.

Then, it says:

... the Cenotaph has been subject to an evolving landscape around it over the last century.

They also say in the government's response that it will - the project, that is:

... offer the community more opportunities to engage with the Cenotaph and its significance, providing new viewpoints and public spaces to appreciate the Cenotaph from.

That is just so utterly offensive and wrong - each of those statements. To use the language of the Integrated Assessment Report and suggest that the development will have an 'indirect impact' on the Cenotaph sounds - again, here we get tripped up by the seemingly mild language of the report. That doesn't sound too bad. An indirect effect sounds not that bad. We unpacked that in a minute with the panel when we spoke to them, but the government is using that to diminish the sound of that impact.

Then, to say that it's been subject to an evolving landscape for over a century is such a half-truth. Of course, our city has changed over that century, but the thing that has been preserved throughout utterly are all the intended characteristics and sacred properties of that precinct area, for the Cenotaph. The sightlines have never been disrupted in any way across that century; they have been respected and preserved.

For the government to suggest somehow that this stadium, which utterly decimates the essence of the Cenotaph precinct, is somehow just part of a developing city, just like other things have changed around it, is utterly wrong and disrespectful.

To suggest that it will offer the community more opportunities to engage with the Cenotaph is an absolute joke, quite frankly. It's a lie and a joke.

From the transcript, we asked the panel, and Ms Penn answered these questions to clarify what was said about the Cenotaph in the report and this comment about the stadium development having an indirect impact on the Cenotaph. She explained it like this. She told us that the proponent's heritage expert, Jim Gard'ner, had made an assessment that had produced that language of an indirect impact. To explain what that language means, she said:

It's simple: if it's physically impacted, it's direct.

She went on to say:

He was at pains -

meaning Jim Gard'ner, the proponent's heritage expert:

and I don't have his words in my head at the moment - to point out it doesn't indicate more or less significance in terms of impact. It's not better or worse; it's just a different kind of impact.

Ms Penn then spoke more about the impact on the Cenotaph on this project. I'm going to quote from her a bit. This is clearly an area that she not only has extensive expertise in, but also strong views about. Here's how she starts it:

... I have very strong views and I believe the whole panel does, and we were informed, and those views were intensified by the evidence we received from the RSL and others who addressed us on this matter. The Cenotaph is an object, it's a physical object, but it's not just that. It's on the Domain, which is the prime piece of Hobart's landscape.

And further:

And that headland, with Battery Point, are the two elements that embrace the cove and they form part of Hobart's identity. They're recognisable: that's part of Hobart. That is a really prime, significant piece of land. The fact that the Cenotaph is on it was a decision that was made 100 years ago - in fact, exactly 100 years ago -

And further down:

... and that's been protected and maintained through the last 100 years by successive local and state governments as sacrosanct. So what that tells you is: the Cenotaph isn't just an object that you can go and have events at from time to time, commemorative events. They could still occur; the stadium wouldn't stop commemorative events from happening. I think that's clear, because it doesn't stop the space being used. But what it does is, as I pointed out, it's more than double the height of the headland. It's another 30 metres above the ground level of the Cenotaph in close proximity. The roof does recede as it goes away, and then it - so it's not - the height isn't right next to you, but it is very, very close.

That intrudes significantly from a visual and spatial point of view, but it also dominates - it's bigger than the headland, so it takes away the primacy of that location as the incredibly significant place that Tasmanians have nominated to commemorate returned service people and lost service people. The concern that we express in the report is that it fundamentally undermines the primacy that has been given to the Cenotaph in that location.

I think it is also really important because that spatial role in the city and around the cove is something that people understand intuitively and subconsciously. Some people engage all the time: they visit the Cenotaph, they are very conscious of it and its role and its presence. Other people who've lived here forever probably aren't even aware of it. Who knows? People have different degrees of awareness consciously, but subconsciously, anyone who's spent a fair bit of time in the city knows what Hobart's character is, and there's a big bit of land up there that's got not much happening on it. It's like that because the Cenotaph houses it and it's because Tasmanians consider that to be incredibly important -

And further:

... so much so that nothing else happens there because we think this shouldn't be intruded on.

Further clarification was then provided by Mr Turner in regard to the Cenotaph being subject to an evolving landscape around it over the last century in that flippant statement made by the government in its response. Mr Turner said this:

Of course, the Macquarie Point area has been the subject of that and the picture on page 58 shows a number of railway sheds. That wasn't the issue for us. The issue was the size and bulk of the stadium. So it's a little misleading to contend that in some way we were ossified, if you like, in our

thinking that this has to remain the same. It doesn't. It's always been earmarked for development. The issue is the nature of the development.

Ms Penn clarified that further:

There's a difference between scale and size. Size is about empirical dimensions. We know it's big, it has certain dimensions. All stadia are big; they've got certain dimensions and some of them are a hell of a lot bigger than this one.

But scale is about relations between things. Something of that same size can sometimes feel bigger or smaller depending on what it's in and around, and that's how we perceive scale. This is a very big, singular, homogeneous object, so as I said before, it just reads as a big element. It's in a relatively small city and it's surrounded by relatively fine-grained buildings and places. That fine-grained context means that you read the size of it - because it's so close and so big in that context - as really huge.

Whereas, for example, the MCG, which houses 100,000 people, is relatively a long way from the CBD. It's a bigger city, but it's also got a lot of space. In proportion to the city the MCG is fabulous. It's to do with the space proximity and its scale in relation to things. The Cenotaph is quite diminutive and delicate in comparison, so that proximity accentuates the scale and the perceived difference between them.

The site of our Cenotaph precinct is outstanding. It's a national treasure, in fact. No doubt it is the envy of other jurisdictions. Other states would never contemplate desecrating their capital city war memorial. In fact, they protect them through legislation with great care, and they think about ways to make them a feature and a place of visitation, and a place in which to engage people who visit their city. We've done none of that, and we're about to utterly wreck the essence of our nationally significant Cenotaph precinct.

I want to speak now about this project in relation to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I don't think there has been enough discussion, inclusion, respect and acknowledgement of what this project has and will mean for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Members here will remember that the Tasmanian Aboriginal community was central to the development planned and under way at the Mac Point site prior to the stadium landing in our midst. Members will recall the important piece of work, Pathway to Truth-Telling and Treaty, carefully produced by Prof Tim McCormack and former Governor Emeritus, Prof Kate Warner, at the request of former premier, Peter Gutwein.

One recommendation from this report was to have a place of respect, acknowledgement and reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in a location of significance. It was this which prompted the MONA vision for Mac Point to include a truth and reconciliation art park. What an outstandingly wonderful idea for our city. What an outstandingly wonderful idea to bring together the broader Tasmanian community with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and endeavour together to move forward in a healing way.

What followed was also quite an incredible and likely unprecedented process of co-design over a period of some years. This is something that was described in detail, I recall,

when I was on PAC at the beginning of the stadium inquiry being done by PAC. Prof Greg Lehman came in to provide evidence about that, and about the co-design process that was under way for that truth and reconciliation art park. It was a respectful and best-practice example of a place-shaping co-design with First Nations people. Members will recall, of course, that it was abruptly cut short with no warning or explanation by the government's announcement of the AFL stadium project. This was a deeply shameful way to treat the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and it has a jarring resonance back to the colonial invasion, dispossession and violence enacted on the first peoples of this place.

With this context in mind, the ongoing intersection of this project with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community is highly sensitive. It was a matter that was considered by the TPC panel in the integrated assessment and the IAR. I note the following comment is made:

No evidence has been provided that persuades the panel that the project properly acknowledges, respects, reflects or celebrates Aboriginal cultural associations and values.

This was explored further in the panel hearing with Ms Mason, commenting the following:

I think, during the hearings, it was one of the most telling aspects of submissions that we heard, in that it was the diminution from what had originally been planned for the area prior to the concept of the stadium. As it gradually shrank and then got back to that tiny area - that dark green bit that's now there, which is based immediately by the Brooker and the Tasman Highway - it has become - 'tokenistic' is too light a word, I think, to use for this way of dealing with the ancestors.

I think also the question of what happens with the artefacts and anything that might be found in the land that has still to be explored for the making of the northern access road, for example, has not been dealt with. While there are acts which will cover that, the necessity to have that road built is incontrovertible; it's got to go ahead one way or the other.

That particular statement on page 100 is that it's very likely that project will have significant negative effects on Aboriginal heritage materials, because it seems to be almost unavoidable, but that's just the view of the panel. It may be avoidable, but it will need to be very carefully managed.

Over and above that, I think the lack of consultation with the Aboriginal community means that we were unable to give any kind of objective - any kind of assessment, really, of how the Aboriginal community felt about it, because of the reasons they give here, that we need to speak to the Aboriginal community, but they were, for various reasons, too busy or whatever. What we heard was that sufficient time simply had not been allocated.

I know from my own experience that consultation with Aboriginal people is complex, it's lengthy, it's difficult. It's very interesting, but you need to take time. You can't rush it. That seems to me to have been a failing in process here, which has led the panel to actually have to reach a conclusion that this

has not been satisfactorily resolved, and in fact has been quite damaging in its way.

Mr President, it's incredibly sad to hear that said by Ms Mason in the hearing last week. It was particularly striking, I think, to hear the way she phrased that. She said, 'it has become - 'tokenistic' is too light a word, I think, to use for this way of dealing with the ancestors.'. It's utterly shocking that we have not only interrupted what was a best-practice, incredibly positive and healing co-design process for an inspirational concept to be at that site, but we've replaced it with something worse than tokenistic.

Mr Prattley at the hearing added some thoughts to that. He said this:

If I could just add to that, I think the evidence that we have heard showed that there had been almost a best-practice consultation process in the previous reset masterplan -

And further, he said:

... and had obviously been very productive in terms of the results that came out and included everybody; this, by contrast, this is token.

Further, Ms Penn spoke about what would constitute best practice in incorporating First Nations people into the planning and design of a project or a precinct such as being proposed here. She said this:

The only thing to briefly add with the plan, too, is that with the culturally-informed zone, as it's nominated there on the landscape plan submitted by the proponent, they do not have a landscape plan there. They've just got that designated as for future development because there needs to be consultation. I want to flag that, on the one hand, that's good; there's acknowledgement of the need for consultation. On the other hand, in terms of current practice for major urban public places now, you certainly don't allocate or corral an area and say, 'That's for the First Nations people over there.' Best practice - and it's not even best practice, it's just good practice - in Australian urban projects -

She said further:

It's disrespectful, all of those things - but what you would do in terms of getting a really good outcome from an urban planning point of view, is you'd engage meaningfully. Because the insights that come from both traditional owners as well as Aboriginal experts in urban design and architecture and so on, which is what was done, for example, at Circular Quay, they inform how you would respond to the site: how you might treat water, how you might treat flora and fauna, where you might locate certain elements that celebrate aspects of place that are fundamental to it and have been for millennia.

That's how it should be done but again, because of the appallingly tainted process here where we had to reverse engineer our way back from a preordained outcome signed off in

secret by the Premier, we've been deprived of our opportunity to do what is right and what will give us the best outcome, and not just for some in our community.

Personally, I find it monumentally sad and shameful to hear our treatment of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in the matter being formally assessed and found to be worse than 'tokenistic'. Shame on us.

The key concept of the proposed stadium is that it will activate the precinct. A question we then need to ask ourselves is, will it elevate Tasmania's cultural and civic life as claimed? Will it activate the precinct and deliver urban renewal? That, of course, is the basis for the federal government funding that's being provided.

The Integrated Assessment Report, I'm looking at page 57, paragraph (g), under consistency of the project with the Mac Point Precinct Plan, says this:

The Panel considers that the Project will not support or promote integrated urban renewal of the Mac Point site.

It's a calm little sentence, isn't it? It's really easy for me to read it here, and it just rolls past our ears, but I will repeat it again because it's pretty categorical and it's pretty important because the whole bag of this project is that it's supposed to activate the site, but paragraph (g) on page 57 says this:

The Panel considers that the Project will not support or promote integrated urban renewal of the Mac Point site.

Those five experts have given us their opinion, which is an absolutely objective opinion based on expertise and evidence as they described: it will not support or promote integrated urban renewal at the Mac Point site.

From the PoSS recommendation report, more detail was given. It says this:

... the physical constraints of the site, are such that it is unlikely that there will be scope for general activation of those areas of the site which are not consumed by the stadium.

They are relatively small, unlikely to support viable ongoing retail businesses and will be unattractive to visit other than to access stadium events.

The commission concluded the full activation potential of Mac Point won't be realised as the project will lead to low level activation and vibrancy with substantial blank walls with minimal room leftover for an activated, viable and mixed-use precinct. By way of comparison, there is a low-level activation, for example, when compared to other plans for that site such as the Reset Site Development Plan. You can have a look at the integrated assessment report on Table 2, page 54, which compares these. Of course, if this stadium hadn't gone ahead today with a vote - potentially we're going to have tomorrow or today, actually - we would revert to the Reset Site Development Plan as the current plan for the site. It certainly has the potential for there to be activation of the precinct and urban renewal.

The reset plan had a much higher level of development and activation potential. The Mac Point precinct plan, the current one which includes the stadium, has only 17,000 metres squared available for activation, as compared to the 135,000 metres squared for the Reset Site Development Plan.

While I note that the government is attempting some post-hoc expansion of the area to be regarded as available for activation by including extra area to apparently be taken from TasPorts, it's far from clear exactly how much, where, and for what purpose that area would be made available. It was discussed in GBE hearings last week, and it all sounds very nascent and undetermined. TasPorts cannot give away any area that is needed for the operational integrity of the ports. TasPorts suggested that they may be able to provide some area to be used for revenue-generating activities like a car park, which doesn't sound like a use that would be highly activating of the site.

The TasPorts area, which is indicated in the government response document, there's some maps there showing the areas to be activated and they've put the TasPorts areas in, coloured nicely purple if I remember rightly, and the area that they've mapped out for the TasPorts bit seems to take in a range of buildings that are already there, including MACq 01, which I don't think will be giving up its footprint for other activities. Presumably they've included that to give the impression that it's an even larger area which is ready and waiting to be activated with the site. But it's smoke and mirrors, pure and simple.

In the hearing with the panel last week, Mr Prattley was asked about the assessment of the significant reduction in the combination of commercial retail hotel floor space from the previous reset plan to the Mac Point Precinct Plan, and he gave us some more detail. He said this:

The Mac Point Precinct Plan, while it's been approved by the minister, has no statutory weight in the sense that it hasn't gone through ... a public approval process that has applied to the previous plans.

...

I don't know whether many of you have seen a lot of the mixed-use developments that take place around Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra that have all been required by the planners to have activated space on the ground floor. The majority of them are empty or used by ancillary uses that are just getting cheap rent on the space because there is a limit to the number of cafes, restaurants and bars you can sustain. There's a requirement, to activate a space, to have a substantial amount of floor space.

I think while the Reset Site Development Plan would generate an activated area, what we're dealing with now is essentially leftover space. It doesn't have street frontage; the mixed-use development sites. Other than being set back from Evans Street, they have no street access. They are awkward shaped sites that are not likely to be particularly attractive to the development industry. The space, I think, gets 5 metres between the stadium and the building; it's not going to be an attractive space.

Ms Penn added to that, and she talked to us quite a bit about the space and the potential use of it and whether or not it would be activating. It was pretty interesting, and she had a map of the site up on the screen as she discussed it with us. If people are interested in that, they can see the video of the hearing to see what she's referring to as she discusses it. I will quote from Ms Penn for a little bit:

... on the note of activation, the Mac Point Precinct Plan - we've talked in our report explicitly about how we believe it's not consistent, but there are details and they're sort of the ones I think you've alluded to around vibrancy and activation, and it being a fabulous precinct that everybody wants to go to, which is what everybody would like and has been in place I think for a long time as an objective.

...

... activation just means it's active; people go there because it's a great place to be. A great place to be doesn't just happen by magic. You don't just build something and then it's great. It's multifaceted: usually, it works really well; it's accessible; it's easy to get to; it's amenable; it's comfortable, meaning there's somewhere to sit; it's quite warm, there's access to sun and shade; and you're protected from the elements. But also, there's stuff going on that's fun and usually that's why there is this point around an economic critical mass: it is critical to have enough activity in a given area.

...

The point is, in this case, we can't predict who will go in there, exactly, but we can say how much space there is for things to go in there, and also whether it will be a nice place to be, whether it will be safe, comfortable, inviting and amenable. Our assessment is that it won't be and that it's not possible to be because there's just not enough room on the site.

I will just repeat that:

Our assessment is that it won't be and that it's not possible to be because there's just not enough room on the site.

Ms Penn then pointed out on the screen to us the areas designated for complementary mixed-use and explained:

As Mr Pratley said, they're quite awkward and relatively small floor plates, which means that they may not be viable or suitable for a number of tenants. I want to point out they're constrained in a number of ways. The width between, that's a staircase there, between that and this envelope is about 5.5 metres. Normally, around a concourse around the stadium, you'd have a minimum of 15. I think, Marvel Stadium, at one point it gets down to about 10 metres at one spot where a couple of buildings and a corner comes in on plan, but then it quite quickly fans out. That 5-or-so metres continues along for the whole frontage of that building.

This is a vehicle ramp; that's another stair and a lift. The stair there is 2.4 metres wide, so as far as access goes, it's a relatively narrow stair for large groups of people. Let's say it's event mode, so it's active because it's full of people, hopefully having a great time at a footy match or a concert or whatever. There's no room for anything out here. In addition to those, accommodating those pedestrian flows, so anything out here being trees or seats or - even rubbish bins, you would be hard-pressed to find a spot to put those in a way that they wouldn't impede the flow, particularly from emergency access.

She went on to say:

As a result, the landscape plans show unmitigated paving. They don't show any landscape here; they show six isolated trees, no landscaping here, because it couldn't be permitted. It would stop people moving through safely. It's asphalt paving, and then these facades are in shade for the vast majority of the time. They're shadowed by the stadium, and then the port activity has got noise and from both of these as well. They're also out of sight. So, if I was going to meet my friend at a bar here at 8.00 p.m. one night, it's winter, it's dark. When it's dark, there's not a lot happening down here.

...

This is now out of event mode. I would have to walk around to this space, and I wouldn't really be able to see very far around the corner. From a public safety, or personal safety, point of view, it would feel unsafe. It would potentially be unsafe because there are a lot of hidden corners. That's going to make me not choose that bar. I'd probably be saying, 'Let's go down to Salamanca Place instead, or somewhere else.' There are hidden corners here.

As I said, it sort of gets worse on here. To emphasise Mr Prattley's point, there's just not enough going on to mean that you have people around anyway working there, for example, or being present to generate enough activity, because I'd feel fine going up there if there was a lot going on, if I knew there were people there.

The other thing that's just following up here is that there's nowhere else in the site those things can go. This has been -

She points out, then, on the map, that on the other side of the stadium is the Aboriginal culturally-informed zone, although they don't have any detail on that to make further assessments. The consultation hasn't occurred. She also points out that it was required from the proponent's expert witness on emergency egress for corralling people before they can move out of the site, so that might impact on what could go in the Aboriginal culturally-informed zone itself; it may be that that just needs to be a big expanse that people can move through as well.

Ms Penn also talked about the Goods Shed, which has been relocated to the back of the stadium near the escarpment, and pointed out that that also is not an appropriate area for activation, that people will not want to walk through the site to it, that it won't feel safe, that

it's a remote part of the site - that for any events held there, people will just arrive by car and get dropped off; they won't be hanging about in other parts of the precinct.

I definitely want to put here on our public record of this place, just in case anyone was in any doubt as a result of all the baseless, hyperbolic claims made by the government about activation of this area. I want to put this on the record categorically: outside of major events, that precinct will be dormant. It will be a dead zone, and it will be an unsafe dead zone at that.

Speaking of events at the stadium, there's plenty of lovely little graphics. I'm looking at one here in my notes that I think is taken from the government's response document, much that it galls me to call it that, given that it isn't. It's describing an annual events calendar: 334 events across 337 days. It has lovely little graphics. It talks about things, although it is double-counting things in this list, so it's a little bit misleading even in and of itself to flesh it out a bit, I believe.

In terms of the events at the stadium, I received a really interesting communication from a community member, an email which raised this issue really well, so I thought I will use that as my discussion on some of the matters to do with events at the stadium. From a community member, this is what they wrote to me:

You will see that the suggestion that the 'full calendar of events' such that the stadium will be used nearly every day, is a little overstating reality. There are 37 days of sport. This assumes that the Heads of Agreement signed by Cricket Tasmania translates to a contract. However, those events are already played here (at Bellerive) so they will not be new - they will simply be at a new venue. ... But, at best, sport will account for 3 days per month.

If we look at the other events, it's difficult to see 'an age of prosperity' sparked by the stadium. There are 40 conferences of 450+ people.

We have to remember we can already accommodate that size conference in our state. We can't accommodate conferences up to 1500; I believe 1100 is the highest we can go currently, so any conferences above 1100 will certainly be new, but those smaller conferences are likely to be transferred. I will come back to the quoting from my piece of correspondence. It goes on to say:

It is a large and expensive to operate, let alone build and maintain, structure for such events and there are many places that can already accommodate such events (with no build or maintenance costs). The majority of use, 260 'bookings' are 'corporate dinners and private functions'. One might question whether no such dinners and functions presently occur and, more importantly, why a 23,000 seat stadium is needed to accommodate such events with, presumably, a few hundred, at most, in attendance.

What the projections by the stadium proponent (the minority government) do, however, is illustrate what the TPC member stated to you - the precinct (aka a stadium as there is little room for anything else) will be a largely empty place for much of the time. And it is difficult to see how 260 business lunches and private functions will stimulate growth (most of them presently occur and, if held at a stadium, they will simply draw income from existing venues).

This is especially so when the interest bill on borrowings, without repaying capital, will be the \$50-70 million per year. And also at the cost of our beautiful heritage harbour, which will no longer be a drawcard.

I concur with everything that community member says. It is a farce to suggest that this annual calendar of events is something to celebrate, or to point to as a sign of success. Rather, it looks to be quite a picture of failure already writ large. I do wonder about the other current Hobart businesses that might be impacted by the smaller events and celebrations that might be pulled away from where they are currently held into this government-run, government-owned entity.

One of the things I've found most disturbing about the public debate around this project is the outright ageism. This negative and damaging rhetoric denigrating the right of older Tasmanians to have a say on this project, and to have their needs considered equitably in our community is, quite frankly, offensive. That the Premier and the government at no point exhibited leadership and called out this elder abuse is damning. This is a government that claims to support an age-friendly Tasmania.

Ministers from this government participate each year, as do I, in the walk against elder abuse on 15 June, which is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The core aim of this annual walk that we do together is to challenge ageism. Well, that's a massive fail, then, on the part of the Premier and his government when it comes to showing leadership on the distasteful rhetoric that cropped up and persisted around this project.

Many people writing to me took offence and were hurt by the ageist denigration. For example, a fellow who wrote to me identified a common catchcry of stadium supporters being, 'old people who don't want it and are selfishly depriving young people of opportunities. These arguments,' this fellow wrote to me, 'are simplistic and wrong. To agitate the divisive and ageist position that is offensive has become the norm.'

I understand why people feel excited about anything that may offer opportunities for our Tasmanian young people, but we have to accept and respect the fact that older Tasmanians also have a right to live in our community, also have needs in our community and have a right to express themselves on any matters of public conversation and discourse that come through this place or through our general community.

I hear loud and clear that many parents want their kids to have the same opportunities as those in other states. That is understandable and I absolutely agree with that. I also hear, though, from many parents who want their kids to have access to and be able to have pride in what makes our state unique and precious.

The stadium development is often equated by its proponents with aspiration for Tasmanian young people, as if it will provide some panacea, creating endless opportunities. Claims that this stadium is a key way that we will be able to stop the exodus of young people from our state to pursue opportunities elsewhere are naïvely optimistic at best. I understand people want us to solve that problem. They want us to be able to keep children in this state but the reality is this stadium may have some small impact for some young people in our community, but it is not a panacea and it's utterly naïve to think that it is.

Certainly, having an AFL team in our state is a source of inspiration for a lot of young Tasmanians and that is to be celebrated. It's encouraging kids to be involved with AFL football, to get excited about following our Tasmanian team, all of which are positive. Although, just as more events at the stadium complex will be transferred from other venues, my guess is that a lot of the kids flowing to AFL Auskick in the state are also cross-pollinating from other sports. That's fine; I just don't know that it's necessarily 'new' participation.

The reality is that AFL football is far from our most popular sport in this state and the member for Mersey went to this in his contribution, and I appreciate that he did. We have a far higher participation rate in soccer - the world game of football - and a huge number of children who aspire to play it at an elite level but are stymied. These thousands of Tassie kids have been stymied for years due to a lack of community facilities, a lack of a stadium suitable for the rectangular pitch and a lack of a well-supported elite-level state-based team. This is a sport that has been crying out for support from our state government for years and years and years. Yet, we have a captain's pick by the Premier for AFL to get, not just a bit of extra support, but the whole kit and caboodle of support, pretty much, and that's incredibly sad.

I know the member for Mersey read out at least parts of the email that we received from Victoria Morton, which I also received and took great note of. I've met Victoria and others from Football Tasmania and discussed the chronic lack of facilities and the underinvestment in football, that being soccer in this state. I won't read in more of Victoria's email because the member for Mersey has done that and people can find it on the parliamentary record in his contribution. However, I do pay tribute to Victoria who's been a tireless advocate for football in this state and I seriously hope that what we pursue here with this stadium, and the focus on AFL, doesn't detract from what needs to happen in the soccer space in our state.

The project has been categorically shown to be detrimental to our state's finances. If we damage our already dire state finances further, we damage our ability to provide basic services to the Tasmanian community and we are hurting Tasmanian young people. All this focus on, 'What about the kids? Think about the inspiration', that's all fine, but we also have to think about the practicality. There are many, many children in this state who need our support, who need government services to be delivered effectively and funded effectively. What we're doing here is approving something that will be detrimental to that, that will take it away from them.

It's an absolute twist of logic to boost the stadium concept with pictures of inspiration for children, while knowing full well that there will be teachers who will be getting sacked, that there will be nurses in our health system getting sacked, that we will see a detrimental impact on our public service which supports the Tasmanian community and Tasmanian young people, as a result of this stadium.

It's ironic to be talking about the fact that the stadium is apparently needed for for inspiration and aspiration for young people, at the same time that this government, just in recent months, has, for example, been cutting TAFE courses relating to other key Tasmanian areas of pursuit such as arts and design, and relating to practical courses like lab tech courses, which feed into our school system and benefit our children. What we're doing in cutting those TAFE courses - and the minister admitted as much in budget Estimates - is we're sending those young people to the mainland to study because that's the only place they can go and do a face-to-face lab course, for example. It's not delivered face-to-face in Tasmania as of next year.

It's absolutely hypocritical of this government to use Tasmanian young people like political props as they boost this stadium project, at the same time that they know full well that they are cutting the services and support that young people need. That's purely and simply, wrong. We're picking winners here. The winner is AFL football and everyone else is going to suffer as a result.

I am intensely interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians, having raised three of them myself. I am interested in the aspirations of all young Tasmanians, however. I'm interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians, for example, who play music, who are artists or writers, or who want to be scientists or academics. I'm interested in the aspirations of young Tasmanians who want to pursue careers in a whole range of areas that are not available to them here at the moment or are diminishing in our state because of choices made by this government, literally as we speak.

Elite sport is a very, very small margin of aspiration for Tasmanian young people. I don't dismiss it; I celebrate it just as much as those others, but it is one small margin. What we should be doing is not preferring it over everything else, to the detriment of everything else. In a very fundamental way, we are underfunding our education system. If we know that the education system is crying out for more government support and we turn around and we build a stadium, that's going to take money from that self-same education system down the track because we will be paying a massive interest bill that we will have to borrow for or cut services to fund. We're condemning Tasmanian children and young people to poorer outcomes.

This narrative about aspiration connected to the stadium is another way that the Premier and his government is driving unnecessary division within our community. They're weaponising it. It's political weaponisation, pure and simple. It's ageist, it's pitting older people against younger people, and it's false. To suggest that anybody who's against the stadium is somehow against the aspirations and opportunities of Tasmanian children and young people is ridiculous and offensive. I know plenty of Tasmanian young people who are not in favour of this stadium, who do not see it as a priority for our state, who have a multitude of aspirations for our state and for themselves, here, that will be detrimentally impacted by the building of this stadium.

What we are seeing here is a government that utterly failed to follow good process, responsible prioritisation of public funding, effective planning to address community need, and is now using ageist emotional blackmail as they try to bluff and bully their way out of it with their cargo cult project.

My hope for young Tasmanians is that they come to learn how unique and utterly special our state and our capital city of Hobart are. My fear, now that I see where this vote will fall, is that in times to come, when appalling desecration of the unique heritage of our beautiful city has been perpetrated by us with this massive bulk of a mediocre stadium complex, our children, then grown to adults and seniors, will shake their heads and ask, 'How could you have let such a terrible thing happen?' They'll shake their head, and what answer will we have to give them?

The best future for our capital city of Hobart is not to try to replicate all the bells and whistles that you'll find in a big mainland capital city; it's to become the best version of our unique self. The best future for our young people is in protecting, cherishing and valuing exactly what makes Tasmania and Hobart unique. That will be what draws people here and keeps people here - not a stadium. People are on a pathway to disappointment with that one.

All the things about our state that young Tasmanians can learn to be proud of relate to our uniqueness, and that's exactly what this stadium is going to damage irrevocably if we go forward with it.

Unsurprisingly, we have heard a considerable amount said, including in this debate, regarding concerns about community division and the need to be respectful of each other and different views. It's in that context that I wish to raise the use of language such as 'anti' and 'anti-everything brigade' and phraseology of similar ilk. We've heard a lot of it across the time of this 'public conversation'. I use that term loosely, actually. The constant use and labelling of alternative visions by a false binary of a positive and a negative is divisive in and of itself.

Those objecting to either this stadium or other proposals are doing so because they are for something. They are for something, just as the Battery Point Community Association, back in 1968, had an alternative vision to the planned demolition of our iconic Salamanca Place warehouses, which were scheduled for demolition to be replaced by office sky rises. They were called the 'naysayers', the 'anti-everything brigade', too, those Battery Point heroes. They were called the 'anti-everything brigade', but you know what they were for? They weren't anti-everything. They were very much for protecting our heritage - our precious heritage of Salamanca, which is now something we celebrate over almost everything else in our city.

The economic value of that Salamanca precinct to us is now immeasurable, particularly to local businesses and to our broader economy. It's one of our most visited sites by tourists. It is an iconic picture of Hobart. That view up the the market with the mountain behind, Kunanyi looking resplendent behind - it is absolutely the essence of our city. And do you know who protected it? The anti-everything brigade, because they were for something, regardless of the names that people called them, regardless of the derision that was heaped on their heads. They were for something, and that is something that we value now, that we thank them for when we look back.

In this instance, I hope never to hear any other leaders in this state use that kind of pejorative language in relation to their fellow citizens and the people who they purport to lead. How dare they?

Every single person who has written to us about this project in opposition to it has been incredibly articulate about what concerns them about it. In so many cases, they are identifying things that they are for because they're worried that this will diminish them or destroy those things.

Every single person who may have a view that this project shouldn't go ahead - by the way, they share that view with the independent experts who advise us on it - have that view because they are for something. I believe they are for things that are incredibly important to our city, to our state, and to our sense of identity and to our future. I thank them for their advocacy so far and, I suspect, what may be their future advocacy on this.

In this instance, the positive alternative visions that we could have for the important sense of place in our city home to be restored or prioritised for the open public space that is available at Mac Point and has had plans made about it - and we've had such things as plans for social housing, plans for an Aboriginal reconciliation art park, plans for an interpretation centre, all sorts of wonderful suggestions - all these alternative visions are also for investment and for jobs and for building our economy. They're for building the character of our city and

complementing it. They're for building the cultural life of our city. It's for retaining positive and culturally important sightlines for our Cenotaph, and for investing in and promoting our world-acclaimed TSO making sure we don't interrupt the wonderful world-class trajectory that they are on.

It's worth pointing out that this is something that I fear we are now habitually defaulting to in this state: pejorative name-calling. It has terrible echoes of Trumpism, to be honest. He's quite masterful at calling his opponents names and, in doing that, trying to undermine their credibility and in fact their humanity. That is what happens here, particularly when political leaders start throwing around pejorative names in relation to their fellow citizens, in relation to their fellow Tasmanians. When you do that, not only is it hurtful, not only is it patently just wrong, it also undermines the humanity of our fellow Tasmanians and citizens. I really hope one day we will see a pivot and a turning away from such base populist political tactics.

There's been some discussion about the role of parliament in relation to this project and where we are now. I note that we had a good briefing last week from Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT), which provided us with good notes to think about in relation to our role. They were respectfully reminding us, particularly they were reminding people in this place with a local government background, that whether or not we approve or reject the stadium order, we are essentially acting as planning authorities. I know there's some nuance to that, but that's what it is. But there are some differences, too, in us doing that in this place.

They pointed out that in terms of the decision we make here, unlike planning authorities elsewhere in the normal planning system, we have virtually no oversight at all. There's no merit to review this decision. The order cannot be appealed to TASCAT on planning grounds to look at the planning merits of the stadium. They put it to us that their understanding was that section 18 of the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* alters the normal appeal rights of a person in the community that they might have to make a legal challenge to this order or conditions, and appears to remove judicial review.

As a result, they pointed us to there being significant hurdles to any sort of reviewer oversight of the Tasmanian Supreme Court. That's fundamentally thwarting a basic concept that we have in our rule of law, that a decision can be appealable, particularly on, say, legal grounds or, if not, merits as well, and particularly in our planning system, any other method provides for that. I appreciated them drawing that to our attention. It is a serious concern. This is a binding and final decision that we're making on this order. There's no second chance on it.

We've had some new information come to us today as part of this debate. It will take more time to absorb that and understand the details of it. I will make a couple of comments in my contribution based on what has been said and made available, but they will be fairly cursory.

I must also address some of the promises made by the government. It would appear to certain members that we've only just been advised about at the outset. I have to say the nature of those negotiations in the 11th-hour announcements feels contrary to the ethos of full informed debate. But no matter, what I think of the individual commitments and the last-minute insertion into debate clearly puts us all at a disadvantage. We're not able to consider those things or be part of those discussions and outcomes, but I have tried to give a bit of consideration so I can add in some comments on a range of those apparent undertakings.

To start with, the recent undertakings announced today by the honourable member for Elwick, intended to strengthen protections and safeguards around the stadium. While I understand the inclination to attempt to insert safeguards, and I think that's a natural and positive one, I cannot share confidence that these undertakings will provide meaningful mitigation of serious and outstanding matters of concern on this stadium project.

It's also important to note we have not, and the community has not, been provided with an opportunity or time to test whether or how any of these announced commitments will have any bearing on matters raised by the independent expert TPC panel, or other advice received. Personally, I cannot see how anything cobbled together at such a late date and in such a pressure-cooker circumstance could ameliorate the serious unresolved matters of concern here.

I want to specifically address the matter of a fixed cost cap. The first point to make on that is that we have heard promises of 'not a red cent more' before, so a fixed cost cap, I'm afraid, falls into the category of déjà vu. I'm sure it will stay in place until it isn't.

The second point to make, to put bluntly, is that this is not good news, in my opinion. In fact, I'm not surprised that the government was quick to sign up to it. Fixing the cost guarantees a substandard venue with substandard facilities, I believe. We know that the construction associated costs will rise. Already just this week we've been discovering that the basic element of concrete-quality sand is depleting in the south. What's the law of supply and demand? When a desired product is rare, and becomes more difficult to get, the price escalates.

We don't have a finalised design of the venue, the roof is still being sorted out, and costs will rise. What happens then? When we've capped the amount at \$875 million from the state and we can't -

Ms O'Connor - It's not a legislated cap. There's no guarantee.

Ms WEBB - Yes, that's right, exactly. What happens when the capped amount of \$875 million from the state can't stretch to cover inevitable, increased construction, design, contamination, remedial costs - all the other areas identified as likely to fluctuate? I will tell you what happens: corners are cut, designs are downgraded, and quality drops. We will be told the lovely glossy designs in the proponent's promotional materials were aspirations. Now, we have to be realistic, and we will have to cut our cloth to fit our whatever. We can hear the smug government statement, 'By the way, the government promised a cost cap, so we can't afford to deliver the design we promised. We will just have to accept the substandard venue and facilities'. This is a lose/lose provision for Tasmania and Tasmanians. It gives cover to the government which has repeatedly breached our trust in the past. Either the government sticks to the cap and delivers a substandard venue with substandard facilities, a lose for the community, or because it was impractical, the government breaks the promise and increases expenditure and the debt associated with the project and that's a lose for the community, too.

We have no control over the will or capacity of other identified co-funding contributors. Yes, we could ask them to increase their contributions, but why would they?

I'm sorry, but all those broken promises have consumed any political capital that this government may have on this issue. We no longer trust such promises of cost caps on the state expenditure. A new independent probity adviser sounds good on the surface, as does a design, quality and integrity review panel. More independent experts for the government to thank and

then ignore, without an accompanying signed commitment that any findings and recommendations by such probity advisers or review panels will report to parliament, release and table findings and reports to the full parliament, not just to PAC - and crucially, that any findings or recommendations made by these new independent advisers are to be implemented verbatim by the government.

I'm sorry, it's just not going to cut it. The government has squandered political capital and public trust, which means for many, including myself, all this indicates is that we need to clear some more space on the shelf next to all the other independent expert review reports that this government has ignored. Perhaps we can put it right next to the TPC IAR.

We were told earlier today that the responsibility is all now on the government to meet the latest conditions sprung on us today by those last-minute deals - just as the government honoured previous deals, we will recall, with the JLN, or with the former-Liberal-MPs-turned-crossbenchers. How did the government having all the responsibility but no shame work out for them?

I'm sorry, but no, too much is on the line to now be expected to believe these malignant spots have changed on this leopard. Yes, the ultimate responsibility will potentially be future elections, but much damage can be done and opportunity squandered in the meantime.

Moving on, I welcome and appreciate the recognition that Tasmanians, with genuine deep-seated concerns about this project and its potential ramifications, have the right to still raise their voices in objection and to support their alternate vision for the site. Absolutely, I wish to reiterate that recognition. In fact, it should never even have been a question that we needed to assert that.

No matter the vote in this place, the community will continue to campaign, as is their democratic right to do so peacefully with or without our endorsement. What I didn't hear was whether any guarantee was provided by the government to also respect any ongoing community campaigns along the rest of this project's journey. Particularly, that should include peaceful protest.

Too often, we have seen this parliament used to curtail our democratic rights to peaceful protest. I'm putting on the record here and now that all protestations of respecting everyone's views on this matter will be rendered null and void should there be any future move by this or future governments to lock out Tasmanians from the publicly-owned public space and public waterways around the project and precinct. I put on the record now: there must be no forestry-lite gazetted exclusion zones in relation to this project.

I'm also deeply uncomfortable with the potential outsourcing of our responsibility as elected representatives. It shouldn't be up to the concerned community members to have to continue restating and restating their concerns. They have been doing that for over two years now - it's probably three, actually. In many instances, concerns voiced in 2022 and 2023 have been validated over the years, such as cost blowouts, and in other areas of concerns we've heard from the independent TPC that those concerns cannot be ameliorated. But don't worry - if you hold those concerns about good governance and future budget crises, you just keep on raising them. Go on, just keep on exercising your democratic right. But that is shirking our responsibility, I believe.

If we hold those concerns, any concerns that such ramifications may eventuate, that means that we should be acting now. We have a responsibility and an absolute duty to be brutally upfront with these concerned community members. We are encouraging to keep campaigning for a better outcome.

There will not be, however, another opportunity to put the brakes on this project. Let me repeat that: this vote on this order is the last opportunity to put the brakes on and put a stop to this.

I've heard mention of appropriation bills. Yes, they may bring another appropriation bill for costs as they rise, and they should be scrutinised thoroughly, no matter what else is on the political horizon. But what happens if the appropriation bills do not deliver as promised? What do members intend to do then, if we scrutinise those bills and we don't like them? Have we forgotten already that we went to an early election this year because the budget was blocked? How many times do you think the community will tolerate that disruption, and why should they? That should be the mechanism of last resort, not a method of policy finalisation or correction.

There is no other parliamentary stop sign on this project. This is it. This vote is the stop sign before the cliff. I cannot put it any more clearly than that.

There will be nothing to be done if they bring another appropriation bill for some more funding for this project. If any member in here thinks that's not a good idea or has second thoughts about the way they voted this time around, there will be nothing they can do about it at that point - nothing, except complain a bit.

I have not had time to consider in detail the undertakings the government has made to the member for Huon, but I do wish to briefly discuss, in context of the need for intergenerationally sound and equitable budget repair, the undertaking by the government to commission an independent assessor of budget repair progress three months after the delivery of annual budgets. Again, this limits scrutiny to the end of the budgetary process, and it leaves the government of the day to decide whether they can wear a positive, or a poor, or a mixed report card. We know how this government is going to treat report cards from an independent expert who's probably making judgmental comment on their work. They're just going to say, 'Let's see, it's one of three - they're biased, they're wrong, or it's their opinion. So let's just put it on the shelf'.

I want to remind members of the numerous calls I've made in this place for Tasmanians to have their say and have their immediate and long-term circumstances expertly considered in the development of budget repair strategies - an independent expert panel to report to parliament to undertake thorough examination of our fiscal situation and make recommendations to parliament on how to get back on short-term, immediate and long-term fiscally sound tracks - but - and this is the important consideration - within clear economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability parameters. Such a mechanism could build unity around a fiscally sound repair strategy while avoiding the slash and burn, the austerity budgets driven by political ideology that we are all now looking at and fearing.

I know other members have done this, and I want to do it, too, because I feel it's respectful. It does extend my contribution, but so be it, quite frankly. This is a contribution that

warrants being thorough, and being accountable to the community. People have worked and made efforts for years on this topic - for years - and I want to honour that and acknowledge it.

I have a very tiny selection of things that I've been hearing. Many of us have shared the vast volume of correspondence we've received, and it has been very difficult to keep up with it. I've tried really hard and did quite well until recently. I also pay tribute to the assistance and the help from Cath, my staff member, but also volunteers who've been helping my office, and also my family who have been very supportive with it too. It's really tricky to try to have to explain to your kids, 'No, I can't do that now. I have to answer some more emails before I go to bed'.

I appreciate the enormous effort taken by so many Tasmanians from all around the state to communicate with us about their views on this stadium, whatever those views were. So many of them were cogent, well researched, articulately expressed, passionate, and well argued. Clearly, this took people time and effort and it was because they cared. It's because they were for something. It's because they weren't an 'anti-everything brigade,' they were a thoughtful, articulate, passionate advocate for something, either way.

I'm just going to use first names attached to some of these comments, because I don't think it necessarily identifies people. Robert said:

Investing in a large-scale stadium under current circumstances raises concerns about the long-term financial sustainability and potential debt that would impact our community. Rather than prioritising this stadium project, I believe our focus should shift towards improving infrastructure, public services and community resources that genuinely benefit all Tasmanians.

Well said, Robert, that was so pithy. What a lovely little summation. Here's another really short comment from Christopher:

I'm so tired and disappointed by the political and corporate game playing and propaganda.

I share that sentiment with Christopher. Here's one from Rodd:

Tasmania deserves its own AFL team - without having to surrender its fiscal sovereignty or compromise democratic integrity. The state should not be forced into unprecedented expenditure as the price of recognition. Nor should policy be shaped in the shadows of private meetings and corporate influence.

Well said, Rodd. I heard from Diane who said:

It is dividing households, workplaces and families as well. I've been around a while and have never been so disillusioned with our leaders. A die-hard Liberal voter all my life until this business.

I also heard from Eleanor:

It would be tragic if on the 200th anniversary of the separation of VDL [Van Dieman's Land] from mother colony, NSW (3 December 1825), the

Legislative Council voted to destroy Hobart's waterfront and the human scale history it embodies.

I'm so sorry, Eleanor. I'm just so sorry. Another one:

I'm a resident of the Nelson electorate and I wish to communicate to you my personal disappointment with the Liberal government's decision to proceed with this stadium folly. As a parent of teenage children, I feel it's our obligation to look after (or even improve) our magnificent State. The concept that we should burden our children with this massive debt would be a gross misuse of our stewardship responsibilities.

One from Peter. It's quite a thoughtful one and it's a bit longer. He says:

I'm writing to urge you to vote against the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point. I'll keep this short.

While I appreciate the fervour and passion of supporters for the stadium, in its present form at least, it falls well short on every discernible level. It will cost more than this State can afford. It is in the wrong place. After analysis and due process, the people of Tasmania should say where a stadium should be sited, not a Victorian football club. Education, health and housing in our State are fundamental needs. A stadium at Macquarie Point is not.

The experts have warned us that the proposed stadium is not an economically viable proposition and to pursue it would put the State of Tasmania under further financial stress. With Moody's and S&P both downgrading Tasmania's credit rating of late, to proceed would be financially irresponsible, potentially disastrous.

The planning authorities have not supported the proposal, and I will not reiterate their findings here as I'm sure you're well aware of their expert opinion.

Please, let cooler and wiser heads prevail and save Tasmania from this monumental blunder. I would be most surprised if more viable alternatives for a stadium were not available in the future.

I agree, Peter. I think you're absolutely spot on and I'm sorry about that. Another one here, and this is quite a thoughtful one from Rob:

I'm writing in regard to the Macquarie Point stadium. I'm urging you to vote against the stadium. My father and grandfather were both returned soldiers. The cenotaph was located and designed to facilitate the line of sight across southern Tasmania to honour the fallen. The stadium will destroy this. I regard it as a desecration. This is why the RSL objects with support of their members.

The stadium is too big and will dominate Hobart's historical vistas. Some areas in North Hobart will only be able to see the stadium, not the river. I'm

upset that the government uses artists' impressions which do not show the true height of the stadium. Tourists come to Hobart for its charm and character; please do not destroy this. Macquarie Point location is an opportunity to create something that adds to Hobart for everyone, a space that can be used 365 days a year.

My 96 year old mother who passed recently could not even get an ambulance when she needed one and her stay in the RHH was not an enjoyable experience, even though the staff were wonderful. It's an old building now with many problems and will need replacing soon. I worry how services will diminish once taxpayers have a huge financial burden associated with the stadium. Tasman Bridge will need replacing soon as well. There's a lot of expenditure coming up and now is not the time for a stadium debt. Tasmania's debt is already spiralling out of control. We're already seeing how badly the government has managed the new ferries. Can they be trusted with a stadium?

Every expert the government has employed has advised the stadium will lose money. Even the PoSS rejected the stadium. Why do we have experts paid by taxpayers if government ignores their advice?

I am the biggest AFL supporter, but the stadium makes no sense. Taxpayers will be paying this off for generations and lose so much of Hobart's charm. The Cenotaph will be desecrated, and services will diminish even further. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I urge you to vote no to the stadium.

People are so articulate and precise with expressing their concerns. I was going to read one that somebody else has read out already, so I will skip over that one and read this one. It's from Jamieson. It says:

I'm beginning to grieve for my city as I sense an inevitability for the stadium - i.e. its approval. Maybe in the future, as the new structure takes form, others, on seeing its mammoth size and its effect on the character of this extraordinary city, will share some of my regret. The proposed stadium will be, quite simply, in the wrong place. A huge carbuncle on the face of the city?

I have lived all my adult life in this city. I have helped to shape it (not always perfectly) through my profession. I have visited striking architectural designs around the world and formally adjudicated on some of this country's notable buildings (including Melbourne's Federation Square and the Great Southern Stand at the MCG, by the way). I suppose you could say I'm an (ex) expert, though that doesn't seem to carry any weight in this case.

The pro-stadium lobby has had an easy sell, made easy by our collective love of footy and our real desire to see a Tassie team in the big league. (Made easier still by the shameless and unprofessional one-sided reporting of Hobart's newspaper, but that's another story).

The anti argument is a bit more nuanced, isn't it? Calling for a bit less cheer squad emotion and a bit more calm consideration.

Such a thoughtful contribution.

Claims about universal support for this project from Tasmanian young people often implied that everybody who's young must be in support of this - that's not the case. There's more support amongst young people proportionally than amongst some older demographics, but it's not everyone by any means. I've been hearing lots of views from young Tasmanians, including - it might have been this morning, it might have been last night, I can't quite remember - a 15-year-old student from Woodbridge who wrote to me and laid out beautifully with subheadings and dot points across different areas the reasons that he wasn't in favour of the stadium. He did that successfully and articulately, and I really appreciated hearing it. It reminded me of something that maybe one of my kids would write if they felt strongly about something and were wanting to reach out to their local representative.

I wanted to share some of those contributions from members of the community who have been contacting us. It's only right, as part of this public record of this debate on this enormously consequential project, that we make sure voices are heard. I'm just so sorry that the thousands that we receive can't be well represented necessarily by these snippets.

This has been a long contribution, but we are creating a public record of our consideration of this matter, which is how we are accountable to the Tasmanian people. There are many aspects of this project worthy of consideration that I haven't talked about at all and won't have time to: environmental issues; transport issues, especially buses; regional impacts; and much more. Some of those matters have been covered well by other members, and I appreciate where they have been.

I also want to take a minute to highlight the bright spot in this, the outpouring of engagement that we just talked about from Tasmanian people. I pay tribute to people who wrote and who contacted us. I also take this opportunity to reiterate that consideration of everybody who's been so supportive. So many of the communications with us included words of kindness and support, compassion for the position that we were in, and encouragement. That was incredibly important to read throughout this time.

I spoke earlier about how divisive the issue has been, as have other members. I hope I'm wrong, but I fear that the division that has rent the community on this, divided families, and split political parties, even, over the last two years, will continue. I fear it will. Despite the Premier desperately trying to tell himself otherwise, the parliament's vote on this matter will not be an end to it. Healing requires trust and, importantly, hope. Hope that things will improve. For many, it's hard to see that occurring after the contemptuous treatment of the community over the last two years on this matter. Where are the guarantees that this bullish and bullying behaviour, characterised over the past few years by secret backroom deals and information only being released when - it's like pulling teeth. How are we to trust that that will change?

It didn't need to be this way. So many times, that's been said. It's been said before, and I think it might be the eventual epitaph of this great white elephant that we're contemplating. It didn't have to be this way.

The team is a unifier, but it has been undermined and tainted. There has been a manifest failure of the government to show leadership, to stand up for a unified community, and to the AFL. When I moved a motion in this place requesting the Premier to seek to renegotiate with

the AFL, it was defeated on the floor with members arguing we should allow the TPC to complete its job, and that that was proper process and the approach to take. Well, the TPC did complete its job. It did its job very well. It gave us a very clear instruction in the form of its recommendation. Circumstances aligned, and courtesy of the early election, they actually were allowed to complete that job, thank goodness.

Its findings mean that the AFL, if they were truly respectful of Tasmania and Tasmanians should have come. At the release of that report, the AFL should have come knocking on our door here to seek to renegotiate an alternative stadium site, given that we so clearly had expert advice that it was entirely detrimental to us to pursue this stadium. We certainly had other options that could have been explored. Imagine the respect that that would have earned the AFL if they had done something as gracious as that. Imagine the unification and the de-escalation of public discord that could have been fostered. It did not have to be this way.

Mr President, you will be pleased to know it's time to sum up. Summing up takes a little bit of time, but it's time to sum up.

Instead of focusing on the genuine and substantial challenges faced by our state, many of them manifestly worsened in the last 11 years under their watch, the Premier and his government has focused instead on one unaffordable, ill-sighted and inevitably damaging stadium. We don't yet know exactly how unaffordable the project will be because there hasn't - until today - been a cap on costs. However, we may have a cap in place, perhaps, until it's convenient for there not to be.

Just look at what's happened so far. We saw it was first \$715 million, then it was \$945 million. Conveniently, just after the assessment by the TPC, it jumped up to the \$1.13 billion that we have now. Do I hear a higher bid? Not an eyelid of the government has blinked once at any of those escalations. There's been no shame whatsoever from the government that they just keep on pushing that price up. There's no reason to believe it won't keep on rising.

It will be a runaway train and, after this week, if it proceeds - and it looks like it will - there will be no stopping the continual escalation. Week after week, there will never be another moment in time where a decision-making body has the opportunity to say, 'Stop'. There's nobody who's going to be able to say, 'That's too much, that's too far.' The only way we could do that in this place is if we blocked an appropriation bill and sent the state to an election, basically. That's not going to happen, or it shouldn't happen.

If it's a 'yes' this week, and it looks like it is, we are either signing a blank cheque or we're dooming the project to mediocrity through cost constraint. It's a lose-lose situation on this project. It can't come out ahead for us.

Not only that, we have been warned by experts in this game that political expediency will have us over a barrel throughout this whole process. Political expediency will lead to lack of transparency, to inevitable errors, and to cost blowouts. That has been mapped out very clearly for us by experts who have no skin in the game but multitudes of experience. The lesson is clear: government clients under political pressure on projects such as this are vulnerable, particularly to variation on contracts with builders, and inexorable, escalating costs.

I'm highly concerned that the near-religious fervour that has been whipped up by the government to try to push this stadium through - I'm concerned it's so exceedingly misleading, that when this project does emerge, it will come crashing down to earth and people will wake up from that fever dream and wonder how the heck we ended up with a third-rate, double-the-cost, mostly unused, massive, monolithic edifice desecrating the once unique and beautiful Hobart waterfront heritage precinct.

On all evidence, and as warned by many of the independent experts we've heard from who are not acting as boosters for the government project, we are likely to see many of the following - and I'm going to run through a little list of things we could quite likely be seeing as we go forward from today.

- cost pressures force down quality: we are likely to already be seeing that occur with the design of the project. For example, where we saw lovely pretty paving in initial images, I'm sure that that's now defaulted to asphalt in the latest plans. That seemed to be the case in what was presented to the TPC.
- we will see attractive features that have been lauded in the glossy images presented in the media to date, being cut and continuing to be cut and compromised as costs rise.
- lovely landscaped environs we've seen pictured around the stadium will fall victim to safety requirements for pedestrian movement and evacuation, and become plain, open-plan asphalt.
- there will be no attractive and comfortable places for families and children to gather to use and enjoy the site, outside of specific events inside - the environment will be too windy, too harsh, too uncomfortable, too unpleasant all round.

Will we know that we are in a special Tasmanian space at this venue and precinct because there are celebrations of our environment, our history, our community story built into the very fabric of the venue? I predict no. I predict those things will be the first things to go when costs get squeezed. Whatever the best intentions there were at the outset, I bet by now we are already seeing that crumble as the cost squeeze sets in. The Premier said, 'not one red cent more', and now he's apparently signed up to a cost cap for his own political expediency and not for the benefit of what will be a far-from-iconic project.

Concrete everywhere, that's my prediction, except maybe in the very special places inside for the special people. I'm sure those will remain very luxurious and beautifully finished. For the rest of us, it will be concrete and nothing to connect us to Tasmanian uniqueness or the Tasmanian story. 'Not a red cent more' dooms us to bland mediocrity, and by the time that's clear, it will be too late. It will be too horrifyingly tragic to say 'I told you so' at that point. By then, we will have wrecked our beautiful capital city - our priceless heritage, our waterfront, our sacred, nationally-significant Cenotaph - all while cribbing money away, year after year, from our essential services to pay the ever-increasing interest debt.

The Premier promised a government with heart. Now, he has guaranteed that whatever way the vote went today, there will be multitudes of Tasmanian broken hearts. A 'yes' vote is an end to precious things about our capital city, which once gone can never be recovered. A 'no' vote, if it had gone through, would have been countless other ways we could have looked

to invest in infrastructure to deliver our jobs and growth at a much better rate of return to the public finances.

If the vote was 'no', the Premier still had the opportunity to be a champion for the team and to go into bat for Tasmania, which would have been devastated at the idea of the team ripped away, but we could have all had his back on that, and of course, the options were still there. We could have had a true 'Team Tasmania' effort.

This decision today will tell us a lot about who we are. Are we willing to approve and reward this disparagement and dismissal of independent experts who have provided evidence-based, factual information and recommendations? Are we willing to approve this precedent-setting abandonment of good governance, accountability and integrity in decision-making? Are we willing to accept this step change into post-truth, misleading of the public, and blatant BS boosterism as the new normal for our political debates? Are we willing, in the face of what we all know to be a dire financial situation for our state, to endorse a project which, when you block out all the noise outside, we in here well know does not offer a solution, a way out, but rather a compounding of our problem? Are we willing?

What will that tell us about ourselves, I wonder? I hope instead, for our own sense of self-worth and integrity, that we are willing to stand up for our state, for the fabric of our democracy, and for the inviolability of our historic capital city.

I had hoped that this would be where we would draw a line in the sand and say, 'Enough. We require a higher standard, not a lower one'. We require a higher standard of behaviour, of governance, of aspiration and of respect for the Tasmanian people. The only way for us to require that would be to have voted 'no' on this order. So that is what I will be doing.

[2.37 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I acknowledge all members' contributions, and certainly the endeavour and the commitment that members have gone to, to get us to where we are on this order.

Given that there have been myriad questions, and there are some answers that I want to put on the record, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.