

Precinct for STEM closer to reality

Bill passed at third reading

Elise Kaine

The University of Tasmania has welcomed the passage of a new Bill designed to secure funding for its science, technology, engineering and mathematics facilities.

The University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill 2025 has moved a step closer to becoming law after passing its second reading in the Legislative Council on Wednesday.

Following an 8-6 vote in favour of the second reading, the council moved into a Committee of the Whole to heavily scrutinise the legislation.

The passage of the Bill will allow UTAS to sell parts of its Sandy Bay campus for housing and help fund a \$500m STEM precinct.

Despite rigorous debate and a series of proposed amendments spearheaded by independent MLC for Nelson Meg Webb, the Bill emerged from the committee stage entirely unchanged. On Wednesday, the chamber experienced tense deadlocks over attempts to impose stricter conditions on the university's land dealings.

An amendment seeking to reduce the lease time frame definition for land disposal from 99 years down to 30 years resulted in a 7-7 tied vote, passing in the negative.

The bill was passed after a third reading on Thursday.

University of Tasmania Pro Vice-Chancellor Southern Tasmania Professor Nicholas Farrelly said the university now had a way to realise the value of some of the land and make a significant contribution to the critical STEM at Sandy Bay project.

"The legislative certainty



**Pro Vice-Chancellor
Nicholas
Farrelly**

also means we can recommence discussions with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania to hand back most of the bushland above Churchill Avenue.

"We will now work towards a Memorandum of Understanding with the ALCT to facilitate the land hand back," he said.

Ms Webb said the passage of the Bill meant "the majority of the Sandy Bay campus being left unprotected, entrenching the Rockliff government's broken promise to the community".

"It was exposed during the dying days of debate that in fact 56 hectares, the equivalent of 57 per cent of the entire campus, is left unprotected."

Ms Webb said her amendment would have provided certainty about land hand backs, and there is nothing in the current Bill which would prevent the university from changing its mind on the issue.

Tasmania's Tech sector welcomed the passage of the Bill with the peak body representing the industry supporting the plans to redevelop the campus to include the STEM precinct.

"The State government can attract a major tech company to set up and drive new levels of STEM education and collaboration in Tasmania and the Commonwealth should now get behind this STEM precinct wholeheartedly with funding," TasICT CEO Russell Kelly said.