

MP blasts UTAS land sale bill

Government accused of 'deliberate ploy' over university campus land

Bridget Clarke

An independent MP has accused the government of obscuring key details surrounding the sale of land at the University of Tasmania's Sandy Bay campus, warning that more than half the site could be sold without parliamentary approval.

The Legislative Council is debating the University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill 2025, which would allow UTAS to sell parts of its Sandy Bay campus for housing and help fund a \$500m STEM precinct.

The bill covers 98ha of cam-



Independent MLC Meg Webb

pus land.

Of this, 14ha between Sandy Bay Rd and Churchill Ave are designated as "vested", meaning any future sale would re-

quire approval from both houses of parliament.

Of the remaining 84ha between Churchill Ave and Olin-da Grove, 28ha have been earmarked for rezoning for inner residential development, seemingly leaving 56ha unaccounted for.

Independent MP Meg Webb said on Sunday the bill in its current state effectively created three categories of land – protected, rezoned and unprotected – which she argued had been obscured by the government.

"The Rockliff government's so-called UTAS (Protection of Land) Bill will only protect ap-

proximately 14ha of the land at Sandy Bay – a miserly 14 per cent of the current campus," Ms Webb said.

"People have been allowed to believe that other than the parcels of land identified for rezoning for inner residential development the majority of the Sandy Bay campus will be protected, with any future sale needing to come back to parliament for approval by both houses ... (but) this is not the case.

"This is either a shocking oversight by the government, or it has been a deliberate ploy."

Addressing the Legislative

Council on March 25, Education Minister Jo Palmer said there were only two parcels of land exempt from protections and earmarked for rezoning.

Ms Palmer said that the bill would prevent the university from "disposing of campus land at Sandy Bay without the approval of both houses of parliament".

Premier Jeremy Rockliff reiterated this on Sunday, denying any lack of clarity in the bill.

"My belief is there are two parcels of land for sale," said the Premier.

"There will be no change to the legislation that is there in the upper house at this present

time," Mr Rockliff said.

The University of Tasmania maintains the remaining land is bushland reserve and was always intended to be protected, with discussions with the Aboriginal Land Council Tasmania ongoing.

It is understood the university began discussions with the ALCT in November 2024 about handing back much of the bushland after the legislation passed the lower house, but the process was paused due to the state election.

Debate is scheduled to resume in the upper house on Wednesday.

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