UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

The Hon Meg Webb MLC
Member for Nelson
By email: meg.webb@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Meg,

Congratulations on your re-election over the weekend. We look forward to continuing to work with you as the Member for Nelson.

We also thank you for following up after your tours of the Forestry Building and the STEM facilities above Churchill Avenue with these questions. We appreciate the opportunity to share more information about these two exciting projects and what they mean for Tasmania.

My colleagues from across the University have been hard at work collating information in response to your questions, which we have endeavoured to answer to the best of our ability. You will find them presented below.

I have also attached our federal election pitch document, which provides a general overview of the STEM Precinct proposal.

Since your original correspondence, we have also published our business case for the STEM Precent, which you can find on our website.

Once you have had time to read the answers below, please do not hesitate to reach out with any further questions from you or your constituents.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Nicholas Farrelly
Pro Vice-Chancellor – Southern Tasmania

26 May 2025

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Attachment A

Questions on the Forestry Building

Section 1: Cost and completion date

Question 1: Please explain the cost increase from $86 million to $154 million

The construction cost increased from $86m to $131m as the project moved from the high-level design phase to the construction phase due to a number of factors including the addition of a new pedestrian bridge to improve accessibility, the complexity of the civil and ground works and the heritage aspects, as well as the significant increases in supply and trade costs across the construction sector.

The $154m figure represents the total project cost – as opposed to the construction cost – which includes costs related to consultants and designers, planning, responding to appeals, contingencies, and the cost of moving people into the building, and getting it up and running.

Question 2: Are any further cost increases anticipated?

No.

Question 3: If so, what is the current estimated final cost of the Forestry Building?

See above.

Question 4: Is it correct that the contract for the Forestry Building included a Guaranteed Maximum Price for construction work? How did this operate in relation to the major cost increases on this project?

Yes. This is all managed within the contract between the parties.

Question 5: What is the current estimated date of completion (including fit out) for the building?

The building will be progressively occupied from December and opened for semester one 2026.

Question 6: When will staff start moving into the building?

We plan to start transitioning staff into the Forestry building from mid-December.

Question 7: When will students be accommodated in the building?

Students will commence classes in Forestry from Semester 1, 2026.

Section 2: Building facilities, functionality and accommodation issues

Your letter correctly indicated that the building will accommodate 3000 students and 300 staff but incorrectly asserted that during our tour I indicated this balance of students/staff was likely to ultimately be different to those previous statements. On the tour, I was referring to the mix of the staff during earlier iterations of our planning, when we had intended to accommodate more professional, rather than academic, staff. We have now reduced the number of professional staff expected to operate from the building in favour of more academic staff.

Question 8: How many people do you expect to occupy the building?

Up to ~300 staff and ~3000 students (of which around 80 will be Higher Degree by Research) will be using the building regularly as part of teaching delivery, research, collaboration and other work functions.

Question 9: What is the currently anticipated breakdown between staff, students and discipline areas/teaching programmes (e.g. Humanities) and other functions of the university?

Looking at student numbers in teaching activities, the Humanities and Social Sciences and Business and Economics are the largest cohorts and relatively even, followed by University College and the pathways programs they deliver.

Overall, the building will be occupied by approximately 75 per cent academic staff and students and 25 per cent professional staff.

Question 10: What is the maximum number of staff and students that can be accommodated in the building at any one time?

Maximum occupancy based on seat count is 1,070.

Question 11: What is the maximum legal capacity of the building?

Maximum legal occupancy under the Building Code of Australia is 2,210.

Question 12: What students and staff are being relocated from Sandy Bay?

Students and staff from Humanities and Social Sciences will be relocated from Sandy Bay. University College, and Business and Economics, staff are already based in the city. Approximately 100 divisional staff will also work from the Forestry building – some will be relocating from Sandy Bay; others will work flexibly across campuses.

Question 13: Was the architect's brief informed by the views and needs of the disciplines and teaching programmes that are anticipated to move to the Forestry Building?

Yes, the brief and design process was informed by a broad range of engagement across disciplines, as well as learnings from the Northern Transformation Project.

Question 14: What advice was given to the architect about the numbers of staff and students to be accommodated?

The architect's brief focused on the need for the design to be adaptable and flexible:

'The revitalisation must take into account that teaching and study modes are perpetually evolving, and the role that technology is playing in the delivery of courses and offerings.

The design must consider how best to provide for this constant change in terms of flexibility and adaptability, and account for the continuing evolution of courses and content across a range of disciplines…Flexibility and adaptability must also be extended to those spaces within the building that need to serve a range of purposes beyond teaching. These spaces act as critical enablers for the University in terms of achieving its objective of embedding itself within the community via a range of activities and events, showcasing teaching and research, ensuring community access and making the University more visible and attractive to a wider demographic than is currently the case.'

The design approach was to enable spaces to support a range of potential disciplines and uses into the future. The balance of workplace to teaching and shared informal spaces was considered to support that flexibility.

Question 15: To what extent has design been predicated on online learning?

Forestry has been designed to support face-to-face learning and an on-campus culture, with classroom provision to support in-person attendance for all on-campus units. Further, the revitalisation includes extensive informal study and meeting spaces and a library to support on-campus study. Classrooms have been equipped with Zoom functionality, which allows for synchronous teaching across campuses. The Forestry building also includes recording spaces for academic staff to develop online content, for students who choose to enrol online rather than on campus.

Questions 16: What facilities will be available to staff and students? More specifically:

a. **What are the facilities for face-to-face lectures, seminars and tutorials?**

   There are 13 Zoom-enabled flexible flat-floor classrooms of varying sizes.

b. **Is it the case the largest collaborative classroom has 48 seat capacity, and six other classrooms have 36 seat capacity?**

   Classroom capacities include: 8 x 48pp, 1 x 30pp, 2 x 18pp, 1x Behavioural Lab with shared capacity of 36pp, 1x Broadcasting rooms, other closed/bookable collaboration rooms. These capacities are based on a collaborative, interactive learning mode and seating can be shifted up or down to suit different pedagogies.

c. **Large first year disciplines/core units/popular options have sometimes attracted 200 or more students together at the same time, and this was seen as desirable. What facility is there for this?**

   In some Science disciplines there can be first-year units with approximately 200

students. In the disciplines to be based in Forestry, class sizes in first year and subsequent years are generally smaller and can be accommodated in the Forestry classrooms. Any larger classes can be timetabled into existing lecture theatres in the city (for example at the Medical Sciences Precinct).

d. How many offices are being provided for staff?

Forestry includes a range of workplace settings for staff, including 46 offices.

e. What size will these offices be?

Typically, individual offices are approximately 9-10m2.

f. To what extent will there be 'hot officing' and 'hot desking' of staff?

There are enough workstations to accommodate all staff relocating permanently to Forestry. For staff, including professional staff, who may work across different campuses, there will be capacity to book workspace when needed. Ultimately, how workspace is allocated and used will be at the discretion of local areas.

g. How will staff without offices store books and files?

There are storage units (book shelves, tambours and under desk drawers) throughout the workplace.

h. Do you expect the lack of office space to be a negative in recruiting staff?

There is significant provision of offices in the Forestry building, along with open workplaces clustered in neighbourhoods. The quality of the workplace design and finish is very high. We expect the workplace to assist in the recruitment of staff given its centrality, attractiveness and quality.

i. How many PhD students are anticipated and what office provision is being made for them?

There are approximately 80 PhD (Higher Degree by Research) students and they will be integrated into academic workplace areas.

j. Will staff have to book rooms to do small group meetings with students?

Staff may choose to book rooms for small group meetings with students (or other staff) or they could also use some of the many informal settings throughout the building. Staff will be best placed to determine the appropriate setting for the interaction they are undertaking.

k. What types of spaces are available for students to interact? How large are these?

There are over 300 informal learning seats for use by students throughout the Forestry building, in a range of settings to suit different modes including focused

study alone, study alone together, public collaboration, private collaboration, relaxing and meeting others.

Question 17: What parking will be available in the city for staff? For students?

The University has several car parks throughout the Hobart CBD, including at the former Websters site, the Melville Street carpark administered by the Hobart City Council, the Philip Smith Centre and Hunter Street. We are also working closely with Hobart City Council to understand the occupancy of their managed car parks to ensure capacity for those choosing to drive into the city.

Question 18: What will the impact be if a large number of students show up at once, for example at the start of semester?

The University manages its events and timetables to ensure that there is an appropriate number of students on all campuses at one time.

Section 3: Soundness and security of the building

Question 19: How sound and secure do you consider the building?

The Forestry building contains a public thoroughfare and has been designed to be welcoming to the community during business hours, just as our new buildings in the north have been. There are secure areas for staff workplace that will be behind swipe access doors.

Question 20: What arrangements will be in place for late evening study?

Students will be able to study into the evening at the Forestry building as they currently do in other city facilities including IMAS, Medical Sciences Precinct, Domain campus, the Hedberg and Hunter Street.

Outside standard business hours, only authorised persons (university staff and students) will have access via a swipe card. Security is available 24/7 and regularly monitor our premises. Our SafeZone app allows users, in the event of an emergency, to quickly share their location and details with the security team. If studying alone, or feeling vulnerable, SafeZone also has a Check-in/Check-out feature so users can share their live location with security.

Question 21: What arrangements will there be to see staff and students safely to transport?

Hobart is a safe area, but staff and students are encouraged to support each other and, where applicable, reach out to fellow staff members and travel in pairs or groups. We envisage the continued use of a private university bus service that will take staff and students to public transport hubs as well as other university campuses (student accommodation, MSP, Domain, Hunter Street, IMAS, Sandy Bay). The university security team also offers a security escort service to accompany university community members to their car, public transport or bus stop.

Question 22: The entrances are small relative to the expected numbers serviced by the building. Is there a strategy for handling disruptions at entrances, such as protests?

The University has sufficient resources and plans to manage the safety of its community during protest activity on and around all of its campuses.

Forestry has a total of 10 entry points (3 publicly accessible, 7 secure) so this will provide convenient and safe entry points for staff and students depending on their travel route and where they are working in the building.

Question 23: Is the building flood proof?

The Forestry building has been designed, assessed and approved against all relevant building codes.

Section 4: Location of students at UTAS' southern campus

Question 24: What are the current internally enrolled (face-to-face), externally enrolled (on-line) and mixed enrolment student numbers at each of UTAS' southern campus sites?

Answered below in Question 25.

Question 25: What will those corresponding numbers be when the Forestry Building is occupied? I appreciate that these will be estimates only.

Our students engage with our campuses in a number of ways, often undertake courses that include units from different Schools, and frequently choose to pursue multiple areas of study through double majors or double degrees. There are also courses based in one location that teach significant components of the course in another location. Pharmacy students, for example, are enrolled at Sandy Bay but many of them will already study large parts of their course in the Medical Sciences Precinct in the city. These factors make it difficult to provide exact figures without investing significant resources and staff time – looking at units will lead to counting of students multiple times, while looking at courses will not capture the various and specific ways in which students are engaging with various campuses.

With these characteristics in mind and noting that student numbers fluctuate and change throughout the year, we can provide some information based on 2024 student enrollments. At a high level, based on 2024 on-campus scheduling, when Forestry opens in 2026, 70 percent of students in the South will interact with the city for classes and activities, 54 percent will interact with Sandy Bay, and 27 percent will travel between the city and Sandy Bay. Prior to the Forestry building, these percentages were 55 percent, 69 percent and 24 percent respectively.

Attachment B

Questions on STEM at Sandy Bay

Section 1: The $500 million cost estimate, business case(s) and sources of funding

Question 1: Was the $500 million figure a nominal or outturn figure?

The $500M figure is nominal and quantified by independent QS advice based on the high-level concept STEM masterplan.

Question 2: What GFA was used in that calculation? What is the GFA of current STEM facilities at Sandy Bay? If possible, please distinguish between indoor areas, glasshouses and outdoor areas, such as zoological facilities.

The building GFA of STEM (or CoSE as it is currently referred) on Sandy Bay is ~48,500sqm. Of this, roughly 1600sqm is glass/shade houses. The 2016 QS figure for a STEM precinct in the city was based on a GFA of 48,500sqm.

Question 3: Please provide the details of your cost-escalation calculation.

The cost escalation applied was ~34%. This was a conservative figure supported by the ABS Non-residential building construction Tasmania Index of 33% increase from 2016 to 2024. The Hobart CPI increase was 28% over the same period.

Question 4: Please advise on the state of progress with your STEM business case and when it will be made available to the Legislative Council and the people of Tasmania.

The final version of the business case has now been completed, independently assessed and provided to the State Government.

It is available on our website.

Question 5: How does UTAS' STEM business case relate to its Appreciative Inquiry Workshop and "initial high-level concept plan for the Sandy Bay campus" that it released on 3 March 2025?

The business case is available on our website.

Question 6: **I understand that UTAS has indicated that it expects to receive approximately $100 million for sale of the approximately 26 hectare area identified in the amendments to the UTAS Bill made in the House of Assembly on 28 November 2024 - Is this correct? If not, what amount does UTAS expect to receive? On what is UTAS' calculation based?**

Yes. The business case is available on our website.

Question 7: Has UTAS developed a separate business case for the rezoning and sale of this land?

No.

Question 8: Is it correct to believe that UTAS is planning on somewhere in the order of $400 million being provided by Governments towards consolidation of STEM below Churchill Avenue? If not, what is the correct figure?

That is correct.

Question 9: UTAS has consistently indicated that consolidation of STEM at Sandy Bay below Churchill Avenue is "contingent" on funding from Government. What is UTAS' contingency plan – its Plan B - if it does not receive such funding?

Until government funding is obtained for new STEM facilities, University staff and students will continue to operate from existing STEM facilities on Sandy Bay.

Question 10: If UTAS' contingency plan is to maintain STEM at Sandy Bay, please provide details and explain how a proposal to rezone and sell land on which current STEM facilities stand is not premature in light of the uncertainty of Federal Government funding?

The Federal Government has consistently indicated that any project requires investment from the State to be considered for funding. Funds raised from the rezoned land will constitute the Tasmanian (State and University) contribution to any development.

Section 2: Relocation of STEM facilities from above Churchill Avenue

Question 11: Please list the STEM facilities currently above Churchill Avenue (including down to the level of individual glass houses) and detail what the plans are for these.

It is too early to provide details as there is a general budget allocation for replacement facilities with the detail to be determined in consultation with staff through the detailed design phase for each development.

Question 12: When will Life Sciences be relocated below Churchill Avenue? What is the amount of space (GFA) in the Life Sciences Building and how much will be allocated to Life Sciences below Churchill Avenue?

The timeframes are in the attached document and GFA estimates are included in the business case.

Question 13: To the extent that UTAS plans to relocate STEM facilities from above Churchill Avenue to below Churchill Avenue, what is the total estimated cost?

The total estimated costs in the business case are not split between above Churchill Ave and below Churchill Ave in this way.

Question 14: How much do you expect to receive for the approximately 5 hectares of land (up to and including the old Medical Sciences building) on which STEM facilities are currently located above Churchill Avenue?

We have not calculated it out in this way.

Question 15: What are the environmental issues associated with relocation of STEM facilities from above Churchill Avenue to below Churchill Avenue and how does UTAS plan to address these?

We will continue to pursue the highest standards of sustainability that we have applied in our new builds and adaptive reuse projects to date, which has contributed to the University of Tasmania buildings being recognised in multiple awards categories in recent years.

Section 3: UTAS' "initial high-level concept plan for the Sandy Bay campus"

Question 16: Is the basis for the estimated cost of $500 million associated with UTAS' "initial high-level concept plan for the Sandy Bay campus" released on 3 March 2025 the same as that outlined in UTAS' plan for its business case to PAC on 2 October 2024?

Yes.

Question 17: Is the $500 million figure a nominal cost estimate or an outturn cost estimate for consolidation of STEM below Churchill Avenue? Please provide copies of material detailing the cost estimate, including cost estimates by quantity surveyors.

$500m is nominal. This material forms part of the business case and figures are presented as nominal and real as appropriate. The business case is available on our website.

Question 18: What is the GFA of UTAS' current STEM facilities at Sandy Bay?

Please see Attachment B: Section 1, Q2. Current STEM facility GFA on Sandy Bay is approximately 48,500m2.

Question 19: What is the estimated GFA of STEM facilities in the planned STEM consolidation below Churchill Avenue?

The high-level concept plan covers two aspects: the Sandy Bay middle campus as a whole, and the STEM facilities within that envelope.

The total GFA for the campus as a whole is 41,500m2. The GFA for STEM facilities is 25,100m2. These figures do not take into account the surrounding land area.

It is important to note the smaller GFA for STEM does not represent a reduction in facilities but rather indicates the significant inefficiencies of our current infrastructure. The planned STEM precinct, developed with STEM staff, students and stakeholders, provides all the required facilities – at vastly higher quality – on a much more efficient, collaborative campus.

Question 20: The one new building that is planned is estimated to cost $300 million – 60% of the total estimate cost of STEM consolidation. How many floors will the new building have and what is the estimated GFA. Please provide annual estimated costs of construction (nominal and outturn)?

The estimated GFA of the new build is 11,038m2 – the size of the floorplate and number of floors will be worked through as part of the design process. All available estimated costs are contained in the business case, which is available on our website.

Question 21: Which building(s) will the new building replace?

Please refer to the attached document for the plan.

Question 22: Are floor plans available for each level of each building in the consolidated STEM?

Not yet. Initial work will be undertaken through the design phase for each building.

Question 23: I understand that the current plan of works for Sandy Bay is in three stages from 2026 to the early 2030s. Please provide the precise years.

Please refer to the attached document for the proposal, including the phasing.

Question 24: Please provide your anticipated annual nominal and outturn cost for consolidation of STEM below Churchill Avenue. I appreciate that these figures may be very approximate at this stage.

All costings are set out in the STEM Business Case which is available on our website.

Question 25: What construction cost contingency is currently being allowed in the $500 million figure?

This forms part of the business case and varies by specific works but is generally 20% for the major building works.

Question 26: Has UTAS factored in likely higher construction costs to its $500 million estimate, if the AFL stadium at Macquarie Point proceeds, and it has to compete for construction resources (including transportation)? If so, what is the estimate for this?

Considerations such as these are accounted for in the business case.

Section 4: Other Design Issues

Question 30: In light of the fact that few of the facilities above Churchill Avenue have been identified in UTAS' plan for a consolidated STEM below Churchill Avenue, where relocation is planned, please include this on a diagram.

The diagrams currently available are in the attached document.

Question 31: Given that science is constantly evolving, and facilities may need to be developed to deal with scientific developments, as was the case with the PC2 laboratory and glass house, will there be room for expansion? If so, please include this on a diagram.

There is ample space below Churchill Ave for future developments should funding become available.

Question 32: Where will the car park be located and how many spaces will it provide? Please include this on a diagram.

The diagrams available at the moment are in the attached document.

A significant portion of the existing parking will be retained. We have a Hobart parking and transport reference group supporting this work, informed by staff and student travel patterns, and preferences and data around the number of car parks that will be needed. It is also important that the parking configuration is well planned to best support accessibility and easy movement around the campus and this will be developed during the masterplan design phase.

Question 33: I understand that, of the STEM discipline areas, only one – Pharmacy - is planned to remain in the same location. Is this correct? Has UTAS developed a decanting (internal relocation) strategy and is this factored into the $500 million figure?

Pharmacy is a discipline within UTAS Health. It will remain in its existing building at Sandy Bay and the $500m costing includes a light-touch upgrade. Pharmacy students and staff will also have access to new and revitalised facilities across the campus to support learning and research alongside STEM, Psychology and Law colleagues.

Question 34: When is it planned that the current Life Sciences Building and other STEM facilities above Churchill Avenue will cease being used? Please deal will buildings, glasshouses and other facilities separately.

Until new STEM facilities are available, University staff and students will continue to operate from existing facilities on Sandy Bay.

Question 35: Will the new consolidated STEM include individual office spaces?

Yes.

Question 36: To what extent will staff be involved in further design processes?

We have established processes for engaging staff and students in the design process developed through our successful Northern Transformation Program. We will continue to evolve and improve upon these practices as we deliver the facilities needed for STEM in Sandy Bay.

Question 37: Apart from STEM, what discipline areas are planned to remain at Sandy Bay?

Psychology, Law and Pharmacy will remain at Sandy Bay, as well as a range of professional staff services, including the Library and student facing services. We are continuing to consider the best future location for colleagues in Hobart from the School of Education.

Section 5: Consideration of refurbishment/upgrading options

Question 38: Please provide details of the how the $116 million and $192 million figures were calculated.

These were internal estimates that were undertaken in late 2023 when exploring different potential options for Sandy Bay, including different scales of refurbishment. The $116M is the bare-minimum cost for conducting a *minor refurbishment* on *most* STEM buildings/facilities on Sandy Bay to keep STEM functionality up to current functionality.

The $192M is the minimum required for a Sandy Bay campus-wide solution and includes the minor refurbishment of STEM buildings but also adds maintenance and light-touch upgrades to the *remaining supporting buildings* on the Sandy Bay site. This includes remaining School buildings and the important supporting functions for STEM, such as Corporate and Student Services and the Library, as a campus wide solution.

Question 39: To the extent UTAS plans to relocate facilities from above Churchill Avenue to below Churchill Avenue, how much do you estimate this will cost?

This is accommodated for in the business case.

Question 40: How much do you realistically estimate that it would cost to upgrade the STEM facilities above Churchill Avenue?

Once proposed alterations and prior works (within the last 3 years) exceed 50% of the original building's volume, the entire building needs to be upgraded to comply with current regulations and building codes, such as updated energy efficiency and accessibility standards.

Detailed estimates of the cost of bringing the buildings above Churchill Ave up to modern building standards are not available.

Section 6: Demolition

Question 41: Under the "initial high-level concept plan", what buildings or parts of buildings does UTAS plan to demolish?

The Administration, Humanities, Maths, Physics, Psychology Research Centre and Surveying buildings and part of Geology/Geography building.

Question 42: What is the estimated cost of demolition?

This is included in the business case.

Question 43: What are the environmental issues associated with demolition and how does UTAS plan to address these?

The building materials from the demolished buildings will be assessed for reuse and used as a ‘materials bank’ wherever possible.

We will continue to pursue the highest standards of sustainability that we have applied in our new builds and adaptive reuse to date, which has contributed to University of Tasmania buildings being recognised in multiple awards categories.