

Submission on the Draft guidelines for
Macquarie Point Multi Purpose Stadium
Project of State Significance

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INTRODUCTION

In making this submission I refer to a number of comments from members of several No Stadium groups. Whilst these comments are from several people, I concur completely.

When the Stadium was announced in May 2023, an online petition was circulated which attracted 32,060 signatures against the proposed Multi Purpose Stadium Project. The majority of signatures were Tasmanian based.

Note: Some data has been taken from comments of members of the No Stadium Group.

BACKGROUND

Stadium makes no sense

Perth is a city of two million people, 600,000 more are scattered around the vast state of WA. That balance roughly equals Tasmania's total population. Hobart's population is roughly a 10th of Perth's. Perth has two AFL sides and Optus is used weekly for at least half the year. Optus was built on a broad expanse of unused land, connected to an existing rail link, and is some distance from the CBD.

To literally drop an arena in the middle of Hobart and have neither the sports nor population to support its use makes no sense at all.

Adelaide Oval is similar. The NFL in US held San Diego to ransom, demanding a new Stadium or they'd relocate the team. San Diego said "no" and history suggests the loss of the team has had no impact.

AFL team? Perhaps. Stadium? No. It simply makes no sense.

Punt too far

Earlier commentary that an AFL Stadium could stand equally with Hobart's icons – Mona, the Wooden Boat Festival, Dark Mofo and the Taste of Summer set around the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race – is all a punt too far.

Every capital city and a few regional cities have at least one AFL-approved Stadium, whereas it is only Hobart that already has these world acclaimed iconic experiences, which are mostly privately funded and that provide our point of difference, attracting domestic and international visitors.

It is a one-eyed umpire who flags that yet another Stadium could ever be deemed as an iconic attraction.

The thing about reconfiguring a ground for different sports is that it's an expensive exercise

- It's only cost effective for crowds of 80-90,000
- To do it for a crowd of 12-15,000 would cost more money than the event would make
- So yes, it could be done, but it would never happen because it won't break even let alone make money.

Basketball: would anyone want to watch basketball from an AFL sized ground?

NFL: where has this ever been played in Australia and how many Tasmania's even understand the rules?

Cricket: we know that test and one day cricket can't be played under a roof unless the ICC changes the rules for Tasmania.

Athletics: we can't afford to upgrade The Domain so how are we going to afford a temporary track.

Football and Rugby: as mentioned previously, we would be competing with similar sized rectangular Stadiums on the mainland with bigger populations.

The only way they can get 42 events is by taking events away from existing venues that are more suited to their respective sports.

The Stadium Australia in Sydney used to be converted from rectangle to AFL for big matches with 90,000 people attending but they gave up on that because it was too hard and not worth the cost and effort so there is no way it will be efficient for a crowd of 20,000 or less.

- The biggest football crowd in Tasmania was 24,968 in 1979
- The biggest Blundstone Arena football crowd was 17,844 - seven years ago (3/06/2016)
- AFL North Melbourne v Port Adelaide 13/05/2023 – crowd 6,310 – Blundstone Arena
- AFL North Melbourne v The Giants 11/06/2023 – crowd 5,025 - Blundstone Arena
- AFL North Melbourne v Melbourne 6/08/2023 – crowd 8,034 – Blundstone Arena
- AFL North Melbourne v Gold Coast Suns 26/08/2023 – crowd 4,416 – Blundstone Arena
- AFL North Melbourne v St Kilda 3/09/2023 – crowd 2,454 – Blundstone Arena
- The biggest UTAS crowd was 20,971 seventeen years ago

It's expected that at least 44 events (28 new to Tasmania) could be hosted at the new Stadium, seeing 587,000 attend per year, including 123,500 overseas and interstate visitors".

- So, they are expecting on average 13,341 per event at the proposed Stadium.
- Also they are expecting on average 2,795 mainlanders per game.
- The mainlanders were nowhere to be seen at the current 6 AFL games at UTAS or 5 AFL games at Blundstone arena.

It is extremely difficult to encourage large crowds to AFL here in Hobart. The interest is just not there. Everyone here in Hobart involved in AFL will tell you the same thing. And the interest is dwindling annually - FACT.

Study re Stadium - concerts.

Below is some data that is specifically on concerts, which the Business Case for the Stadium is underpinned by: The projection is for 8 concerts every year - 3 shows with an attendance of 30,000 and 5 shows of 15,000 for 165,000 patrons per year. This is the largest contributor to the annual attendance of the venue of any event type.

In the attached tables show data from mainland Capital city Stadiums and the recent FooFighters tour as a case study.

One data point not included in these tables and needs to be kept front of mind is that Tasmania has the lowest weekly median personal income of all states in Australia at \$701. (Source - 2021 Census)

Key Points –

Table 1 - FOO FIGHTERS 2023 AUSTRALIAN TOUR DATA

- Cell J8 - The average number of tickets sold per 100 people across all markets was 1.268 / 100
- Cell C10 - IF Mac Pt was built and hosted a show on this tour the number of tickets per 100 people is 5.455/100
- Cell C12 - IF Mac Pt was built and hosted a show on this tour the market would need to produce sales 330% above the national average
- Cell F5 - Attendance for the Adelaide Show was only 21,000 in a venue with a capacity of 27,000
- Cell F6 - Adelaide, with a population of 1.418M, 258% higher than Tasmania, could not sell out a show in a venue with a capacity 10% lower than Mac Pt

To summarise, the Business Case for the Stadium relies on residents of Tasmania to buy tickets at a rate 330% higher than the national average for this tour to sell it out.

TABLE 2 - STADIUM SHOWS IN AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL CITY VENUES - 2014-2023

This table captures the performances by touring acts between 2014 and 2023 in capital city Stadiums. For the purposes of averaging 7 years has been used instead of 9 to account for COVID impacts. Hobart and Mac Point is included to illustrate where it would sit in the market, using the projections from the Business Case, if it were in operation over the period.

- Cell C50 The Business Case projects 8 concerts a year
- Row 52 No capital city in the country averages 8 concerts a year
- Row 55 Sydney and Melbourne have approx 30% of the total market each. Tasmania has 3.1%
- Row 57 The percentage of the market/population required to attend a venue to sell out a venue. Hobart requires 5.45% versus 1.32% for Accor, 1.42% for Suncorp, and 1.18% for Marvel. The next highest is Adelaide Oval at 3.17% which only averages 1.43 shows per year
- Row 60 Mac Pt is projected to sell more tickets per year than Perth (+18%) and Adelaide (+72%). Despite a market/population being 25% the size of Perth's and 40% of Adelaide's.
- Row 61 Total attendance as a percentage of market population across the period is very consistent across all markets - between 34% and 46%. Except Mac Pt, at 210%, the state with the lowest weekly median personal income of all states in Australia

Now Jeremy Rockliff will say arena tours will come down and play the Stadium because it has a roof.

The price of admission to play Tasmania for a major tour, purely on transport of equipment from the mainland, additional accommodation and pay for crew, would be between \$500 and \$700K. That would burn 20%-30% of the box office on a show of 15,000 patrons (based on an average net ticket price of \$150). And then there is the horrendous patron and artist experience and woeful acoustics of playing in a half-empty Stadium.

Why the focus on concerts? The average event profit per patron for a venue from a concert is approximately 4 times that of an AFL fan. So if the projection is out by only two shows that would equate to the entire season's revenue from the AFL with 7 games.

Adelaide averages 2 shows a year and can't sell out Foo Fighters with a population approx 2.5 times Tasmania's..... it says it all.

For all the reasons above, I strongly believe that over half the total projected event revenue will not be delivered because there is no case for concert promoters to bring shows at anywhere near the level projected.

TABLE 2

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THE PROPOSAL

The Greens and No Stadium supporters strongly support an AFL and AFLW team and offered enthusiastic support for Tasmania’s bid in 2022.

That is when Premier Rockliff reassured Tasmanians our bid was not contingent on a billion dollar Stadium and this is where the deceit began.

Tasmania deserves a team in our own right and shouldn’t have to go into debt for up to and no doubt over a billion dollars for an unneeded Stadium. Tasmania has two Stadiums where AFL has been played for years.

At the Stop the Stadium Rally on 13 May 2023, then Greens Leader Cassy O’Connor committed to moving in parliament to reject the Stadium and she did just that. Since then, we’ve been the strongest political voice against the proposal.

Current Greens Member for Clark, Vica Bayley MP has taken up the fight. Vica outlined the Greens’ position on the Stadium and the role of a Project of State Significance process to the Tasmanian Parliament [here](#).

You can read more of the Greens’ public and parliamentary statements here:

- [Public statement](#) following the government’s announcement of the Stadium site as Macquarie Point.
- [Motion in parliament](#) outlining many of the arguments against the Stadium.
- [Further comments](#) opposing the Stadium when the business case was released.
- [Statement and letter](#) to the AFL withdrawing our support for the team.

I fully support the Statement from the Green’s re former AFL CEO Gil McLachlan’s attempt to dictate to Tasmanians what our priorities should be, despite the clear community sentiment. You can read that statement [here](#).

PLANNING ASSESSEMENT

A Mac Point Precinct Plan, as referenced in the draft guidelines, is still in development, did not exist at the time of the Ministerial Direction or at the time of publication of the draft guidelines. The proponent should specifically report against the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with all elements of all current relevant planning documents for the site, including:

- The Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme 1997 - <https://www.hobartcity.com.au/files/assets/public/v/6/development/planning-schemes/sullivans-cove-planning-scheme-1997-10-may-2023.pdf>
- The Macquarie Point Site Development Plan https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources/2015/additional_releases/macquarie-point-draft-precinct-plan-unveiled
- Macquarie Point Reset Masterplan 2017-2030 - https://www.planning.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/705997/Applied-adopted-or-incorporated-document-Macquarie-Point-Reset-Masterplan-2017-2030.PDF

The Commission should assess the project against compliance with prescriptions in these planning documents.

The Aboriginal Heritage Act (1975) is acknowledged as deficient and is currently under review. Projects of this scale and significance should not be assessed until that process has been completed. Refer to comments by Professor Greg Lehman re consultation at the Public Account Committee meeting of 23 June 2023 https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/71260/Public-Accounts-Committee-23-June-2023.pdf

Consultants engaged by the proponent should not have existing government contracts and questionable consultants like Price Waterhouse Coopers should be excluded.

An independently verified report detailing the full, updated cost estimate of the project should be provided.

The proposed source of the funding should be detailed.

A report prepared under 'Site description, features and context', should include:

- future flood modelling, taking into account sea level rise;
- details on remaining site contamination issues including proposed treatments, if any.

A detailed independent visual impact assessment must be provided, with impacts from a variety of viewpoints modeled, including, but not limited to:

- The Tasman Bridge;
- The Derwent River;
- The Cenotaph;
- Various locations within Sullivans Cove
- kunanyi/Mt Wellington.

Details and plans of any proposed cut and fill should include proposed building footings.

A cost-benefit analysis should detail:

- The full financial cost of the project; this should be disclosed so that all Tasmanians and taxpayers are aware of the full cost of the project;
- The opportunity cost of not using the site in accordance with the previously agreed and finalised development management plan;
- The cost associated with paying out commercial contracts entered into in line with the previously agreed and finalised management plan;

A social and cultural analysis report should:

- Consider the recruitment and accommodation of the construction workforce required to deliver the project and the impacts on housing availability across the construction period;
- The perspective of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and the effective abandonment of a Truth and Reconciliation Park;
- The impact of the development on the built cultural heritage values of the Sullivans Cove precinct.

Reports examining the urban form of Sullivans Cove should also analyze the effect of any impacts from the proposed project on the existing cultural heritage values of the Cove.

Mass transport and public transport analysis should only consider those aspects of public transport that are existing, or formally form part of this proposal, as there are no guarantees other mass transport proposals that have been mooted will eventuate.

Traffic and transport analysis must detail congestion issues on adjacent roads, including the approach to Davey Street and Davey Street itself. Traffic is already a huge problem in Hobart from both directions, adding an event of 23,000 people trying to get to one destination, would be a complete nightmare.

Noise impact assessment must consider the activities of adjacent businesses and residences and the likely impact of all aspects of the operation of the project on neighbours, including construction and operation.

SUMMARY

Too many questions remain unanswered regarding the full costing of the Stadium. Scepticism about the accuracy of the government's costings and economic benefits remain, with several experts saying these are optimistic, unrealistic and unfair.

Penalties will apply if timelines aren't met, and it's Tasmanians who will bear the cost. As anyone who's built a house knows, building projects are rarely completed on time.

Skilled and qualified construction workers are in short supply throughout the country, never mind in Tasmania, and surely building homes should be prioritised given we have so many Tasmanians sleeping rough or couch- surfing.

Premier Jeremy Rockliff inherited this poisoned Stadium chalice, but he should have rejected it. Building a Stadium should never have been a condition for Tasmanians to have an AFL team. It's a one-sided deal loaded with unacceptable financial risk for Tasmanians.

Tasmania has two AFL-standard Stadiums. Matches are played in both – but to declining audiences

Michael Ferguson needs to remember that the word 'Stadium' was not mentioned when Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a federal funding contribution for the development of the Macquarie Point site. ***The funding was for the site's urban redevelopment. Not a Stadium.***

And finally, I refer you to the Public Accounts Committee of Friday 8 December 2023, where Michael Ferguson cannot give clear answers to the GST exemption for the \$240 million dollars from the Federal Government, nor to the full costing of the Stadium to taxpayers

https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/78053/Public-Accounts-Committee-8-December-2023-FINAL.pdf

In conclusion The Stadium will not benefit Tasmania or its citizens and will put the state and future generation into unwanted and unnecessary debt for decades to come.

Another question is how much of Tasmania's taxpayers' money has already been spent on this project? Many would say millions of dollars, and to what end? what benefit?

Meanwhile Tasmania has the worst ambulance ramping, health system crisis, doctor availability crisis, rental crisis, the worst literacy record in the country because so much money has been siphoned away from essential services.

Surely Tasmanians deserves better?

Thank you for your kind consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely

Janice Overett
No Stadium Group

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