2nd June 2025

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Submission on the proposed stadium at Macquarie Point as part of the agreement with the AFL for granting the 19th AFL licence to Tasmania for the Tasmanian Devils Football Club

I note that the draft enabling legislation, permits, and associated conditions were made public on 27 May 2025.

The issue of cost extends beyond construction to include operating costs, the business and revenue models, long-term maintenance, and the physical impact on the surrounding area — such as the viability of growing turf. These issues should have been comprehensively addressed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) in its assessment.

I strongly believe the government erred in removing the project from the Projects of State Significance (PoSS) process and instead drafting bespoke legislation to push it through. The government has claimed the PoSS process is too lengthy and fraught with risk based on the history of other projects. However, this process was established by Parliament on behalf of the people of Tasmania and should not be circumvented. The TPC should have been allowed to complete its work and determine whether the stadium is viable at Macquarie Point, and under what conditions.

Should this legislation proceed, any debt incurred must be transparently disclosed on the General Government's balance sheet and recorded in Finance General. It should be paid to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) through grants, rather than disguised as equity

transfers, especially given there is no real equity value during construction. This approach would be more honest and transparent.

These financial matters should be fully understood before legislation is passed. That is the role of the TPC and the PoSS process — not Parliament.

Tasmania has a significantly smaller and more geographically dispersed population than Western Australia or South Australia. Those states had the population and multiple AFL teams to justify new stadiums. Tasmania has only one team. I fully support having our own team — we should have had one long ago — but the AFL licence should not be contingent upon immediate construction of a new stadium. With a better process and more time, a stadium in a more suitable location could gain far broader community support.

The Premier signed the agreement with the AFL without Cabinet approval or Treasury advice. This unilateral decision has deeply divided the state and generated widespread resentment at a time that should have united Tasmanians in pride.

It is both **immoral** and **improper** for the government to use overt or implied threats — or to assign blame — regarding the future of the team as a tactic to pressure support for the project.

Let me be clear: I support our team and understand the need for a purpose-built facility. However, since this process began, experts — and most Tasmanians — have raised serious concerns about the Macquarie Point site, including the lack of thorough consideration of alternative locations.

It is inappropriate to place Tasmanian MHAs and MLCs in a position where they are pressured to vote for legislation under the false premise that a vote against the project is a vote against Tasmania having a team.

There are unresolved and serious issues: the project’s economic rationale, its buildability, and critically, its operational and financial

sustainability. I would argue that Tasmania may not need a new stadium at all — but if we do, we must select the **right** site. Macquarie Point is not that site.

I am also deeply concerned about the State's deteriorating financial position, and the failure — by both government and opposition — to present a credible path to budget sustainability. Instead, spending continues to rise without any plan for responsible fiscal management.

This situation has been exacerbated by two early elections and roughly $1.4 billion in pork-barrel promises made during each campaign. While not all commitments were unnecessary, without those early elections, there may have been less opportunistic spending and more strategic investment.

Importantly, the stadium was never taken to the electorate as part of the original agreement. Cabinet was not consulted. During the 2023 election campaign, the Premier promised a hard cap of $375 million — "not a cent more." To now acknowledge higher costs, with taxpayers expected to cover the difference, is **dishonest and misleading**.

I reiterate: I support a Tasmanian AFL team. We are a founding heartland of the sport, and we deserve a place in the national competition.

But I also understand and share the concerns raised by the TPC regarding the feasibility of building a stadium at Macquarie Point. The views of neighbouring stakeholders — including the RSL, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and others — must not be ignored.

If this project fails or causes long-term harm, responsibility will rest entirely with the Rockliff Government and the Premier who signed the agreement — not with Members of Parliament performing their democratic duty. This government's refusal to listen to voices beyond its echo chamber is reminiscent of the recent Liberal Party's federal defeat, where the blame lay squarely with its leadership.

There are numerous unanswered questions about the stadium's priority and impact:

- Why is AFL more valuable to society than the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra?
- Why are the jobs of mainland tradies prioritised over those of Tasmanians with relevant skills for more appropriate developments?
- Why is building a stadium that will be empty most of the year more important than building housing for the homeless?
- Why is a stadium used only a handful of times annually more important than the daily lives of thousands of nearby residents?
- Why is it acceptable to endanger workers and users through contaminated soil and deep excavation when alternative developments wouldn't pose those risks?
- Why should a few city businesses benefit at the expense of others around the state due to the substitution effect?
- Why is a venue for a sport more sacred than the Cenotaph — our veterans' memorial?
- Why spend a billion dollars on a stadium that will be closed 96% of the time to the very people who paid for it?
- Why are residents' concerns about safety, peace of mind, and their children's future being ignored?

And the most pressing questions of all:

- Why are you determined to build a stadium when there are people sleeping on Tasmania's streets?
- Why are you determined to build a stadium when people are going hungry?

- Why are you determined to build a stadium when medical centres are stretched thin?
- Why are you determined to build a stadium when those suffering mental health issues can’t access timely treatment?
- Why are you determined to build a stadium when schools are overcrowded and underfunded?
- Why are you determined to build a stadium when ambulances are ramped outside hospitals?

I look forward to the stadium project being totally dropped, and a better plan created by this government to help those Tasmanians most in need now.