

Letter #1

Dear Premier

Thank you for sending me what appears to be a standard letter of response, although I must say I was surprised and disappointed that you did not address the very important issues that I had raised.

What is of a greater concern, however, is your suggestion that the university's decision to relocate sits "with the University as a private organisation."

As your advisers and you would know, the University is not a private organisation - it is a statutory body established by an Act of the Tasmanian parliament, and therefore it is accountable to parliament and the Tasmanian people.

I understand that you made the same mistaken comment in Parliament recently. In doing so, you are misleading people into believing that your government has no responsibility in the University's decision making.

The truth is that your government plays a very important role in decisions made by the university. That is because, apart from the University being a public body, under the University's Act:

- the Minister for Education appoints two members to the University's governing body, the University Council; and
- before other appointments are made to the University Council, the Minister and Council must consult with each another.

Now that the HCC's electors' poll has delivered an overwhelming rejection of the University's plan to move from Sandy Bay into the city, a process of healing and regaining of trust is required among the University's members and the local community. As Premier, you are best placed to lead that process and I therefore ask that your government:

- step in immediately and request the University Council to put an end to the planned move, and ask the Council members to reconsider their positions on Council;
- consider the opportunity to partner with UTAS to investigate the conversion of some of UTAS' buildings in the city to residential apartments with an adequate amount being set aside for social and affordable housing purposes, in an effort to reduce homelessness in Hobart;
- amend the University's Act so that the sale or long-term lease of any University land is subject to government approval; and
- as previously requested, commission an independent enquiry to review UTAS and to make recommendations on how to: (a) ensure there is greater public accountability in UTAS governance and operations; and (b) ensure that UTAS delivers leading educational outcomes at all of its campuses, including at its Sandy Bay campus.

Finally, I would be grateful if you would publicly correct your comment that the University is a private organisation.

I look forward to your response.

Letter #2

Good morning, Minister.(for Education)

Further to my 2 October email, as a proud UTas graduate I was deeply shocked to read Matt Denholm's article in The Australian this morning about UTas staff having little confidence in the UTas leadership.

This reflects the grave crisis within Tasmania's only public University. Immediate action is required to restore confidence in UTas and rebuild its reputation, so that students and staff from Tasmania and elsewhere will want to study and teach at Australia's fourth oldest University.

However, the current UTas leadership appears unwilling or unable to take that action.

As the the Minister responsible for UTas under the UTas Act, I ask that you intervene in this educational crisis and commission an independent enquiry into UTas.

I also ask that for the upcoming University council appointments to be made by the University council, for which the University council is required under the UTas Act to consult with you before making any appointments, that you insist that the members to be appointed are truly independent of the current University leadership and University council.

Letter #3

My email to Matthew Denholm (Tasmanian correspondent with The Australian):

Hi Matt.

Great article about UTAS in the Australian today. As a proud UTAS graduate, I'm astounded by the lack of public accountability in the UTAS governance structure within the state's only public University.

I believe it's this lack of public accountability that has allowed the VC and the University council (a majority - not half - of whose members are appointed by itself) to become property developers rather than focusing on their core business of delivering world class tertiary education in Tasmania.

This absence of public accountability is also reflected in the Premier's negligible interest in the crisis that's unfolding within UTAS. The Premier does not appear to understand or care that UTAS is a public statutory body, established by an Act of the Tasmanian Parliament, and therefore UTAS is accountable to the Tasmanian people through the Parliament.

Neither does the State's Minister for Education, who has also been silent, but who under the UTAS Act is the Minister responsible for UTAS.

I encourage you to continue investigating the issues raised in your article.

An independent commission of enquiry is needed to restore public confidence in UTAS, and to recommend the changes needed to improve UTAS's public accountability, and to make the country's fourth oldest University one of the leading institutions of higher learning.

Letter #4

Dear Premier

Thank you for your response.

You mentioned that you would like to see a compromise. Here's a proposed compromise that I encourage you to consider discussing with the UTAS Vice-Chancellor at your next meeting with him:

- UTAS quietly abandons the move of any of its faculties/schools from the Sandy Bay campus into the city.
- UTAS becomes a sponsor of, and gets the naming rights to, the new stadium at Macquarie Point; so it's called UTAS Stadium. This will serve to promote the University to interstate and overseas audiences whenever there is a televised sporting event at UTAS Stadium.
- UTAS and the State Government announce a partnership to investigate the feasibility of re-purposing some of UTAS' buildings in the city for use as 'build to rent' social and affordable housing - including for essential workers such as State government nurses, police, and teachers - to be owned by UTAS, rented by these tenants (with the State Government providing a rental subsidy), and managed by a private facilities management business.
- UTAS announces the sale of its surplus buildings in the city, to fund its sponsorship of the new stadium.
- UTAS commits to developing a new Master Plan for the Sandy Bay campus, in proper consultation with staff, students, alumni, business, the local community, the HCC and the State government.
- UTAS announces it is leveraging its global number one ranking for climate action to attract the Asia-Pacific's leading energy transition industry players and researchers to co-locate to the Sandy Bay campus to pursue their research and activities.

Please let me know your thoughts on my suggested compromise?

Regards