

**For immediate release
Sunday August 28, 2022**

UTAS WASTES HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS TO PROMOTE ITS MOVE TO HOBART CBD

THE University of Tasmania today started a cash splash on the first part of its hundreds of thousands of dollars' multimedia campaign to try to convince Tasmanians that the complete relocation from its Sandy Bay Campus to Hobart's CBD is a good one.

The Save UTAS campus group says a letter sent to university staff by the Chancellor Alison Watkins gives forewarning of her appearance in coming weeks in a campaign on television, radio, social media and in newspapers spruiking why the university is making the move into the city. The advertising campaign began today.

Save UTAS campus convenor Prof Pam Sharpe said UTAS is using money that should be for academic purposes, to promote itself. It smacked of desperation to try to turn public sentiment around.

"The fact Melbourne-based Ms Watkins is now front and centre in an obviously expensive and widespread communications campaign to state UTAS's relocation case is acknowledgement of desperation at the growing tide against the move into Hobart's CBD," Prof Sharpe said.

"The Chancellor has been missing in action throughout this whole debate but now is suddenly fronting the campaign. This is a massive slap in the face for the Vice Chancellor Rufus Black who has lost all credibility and public confidence because of his dogged and unrelenting refusal to consider anything but a complete campus relocation. UTAS has also refused to abide by a Hobart City Council March 2022 directive to conduct a proper community consultation on whether the community wants the campus to be relocated. Now its Chancellor is trying to turn around community support by telling us how the move is good for everyone from uni students through to Hobart businesses, and CBD users by claiming so-called greater student access and spurious reduced pressure on parking arguments.

"The question must be asked why is UTAS now calling on its Chancellor to front a media campaign when Rufus Black has been its spokesperson?"

"Has management finally read the tea leaves and realised the groundswell against the move is having a detrimental impact on its plans?"

Professor Sharpe said UTAS was undertaking the massively expensive campaign in the lead up to when Hobart City ratepayers would be voting in an elector poll and for new Hobart City Council councillors.

“The poll gives Hobart ratepayers their only opportunity to say no to relocation and the election gives voters the opportunity to vote for candidates who are against the city move.”

Professor Sharpe questioned whether the Chancellor would now be more reasonable and consider the option of maintaining the Sandy Bay campus similar to what had been suggested by the Lord Mayor an article in the *Mercury* newspaper yesterday Saturday August 27.

“Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds asked for a compromise solution to the relocation. She said the Hobart City Council (HCC) had asked for ‘a proper community engagement process that would include being open to the modification of plans and consideration of compromise options’ yet it was ‘disappointing UTAS had no intention to step back from 100 per cent relocation to the city’.

“The fact UTAS is ignoring even the HCC which will be in due course considering its re-zoning application which has been paused because of approximately 150 significant queries from council officers, shows its arrogance that it will attempt to proceed with full relocation at all costs,” Prof Sharpe said.

“At the same time, questions must be asked how much is UTAS’s massive PR campaign going to cost with the overall spend on PR and marketing consultants, television, radio and social media production and placement?

“If nothing else, it proves the university is flush with money and is happy to spend it trying to convince the community that what it's doing is somehow right.

“Yet at the same time, it will not allow a proper consultation with the community on the whole relocation plan.

“There is no doubt the media blitz is being conducted to try to convince voters in the upcoming polls.

“This massive advertising cash splash should be concerning for the whole community when UTAS has been saying it needs to make the move to remain viable into the future,” Prof Sharpe said.

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