

'Take over' riles traders

Park plan alarm sparks UTAS talks

JUDY AUGUSTINE

MORE Hobart business owners have spoken about their concerns over plans for a new parklet on Melville St, with one claiming he had already been hit by what he felt was a takeover of the city by the University of Tasmania.

The owner of McCann's Model World, Shane Bastick, said he had been forced to move his business when UTAS bought the building he was in.

"It was January 2018, and my landlord came to me and said he'd been offered a massive amount for his property and he had to sell," Mr Bastick said.

"We left the day they took ownership because we didn't want to be pushed out."

The store has been operating since 1979, initially located inside McCann's Music, before moving next door in 1991.

Mr Bastick took ownership in 2008 and said that he wouldn't have moved if he wasn't forced to.

"We found out quite early it was going to be a walkway so we knew we weren't going to be able to stay," he said.

Now he's worried about the impact of proposed new parkland by UTAS on his business.

"The CBD, that's for administration, medical, retail – it doesn't stand for a glorified high school with parklands around everywhere," he said.

Mr Bastick said he feared



Shane Bastick, of McCann's Model World.

the university was "taking over" the CBD.

"We're against this push to buy more of the town," he said.

"The uni are telling the council what they want and the council are saying 'How high do you want us to jump?'"

Sheepskin and Opal World manager Allyca Williams said she only found out about the Melville St parklet plan on Friday from other operators.

"I think it's a terrible idea. It's going to stop people from coming to our store," she said.

"It will affect all businesses along this street."

Knife Shop co-owner Michael Robinson believed the plan would be "disastrous" for the city.

"Our main concern is the blocking off of Melville St. The blocking of that road will increase traffic on Brisbane St," he said.

Mr Robinson said he was also concerned about the ac-

cessibility of his business to customers and delivery trucks.

And like Mr Bastick, he was also worried about the university "taking over" the city.

"They just seem to be buying up real estate left, right and centre," Mr Robinson said.

A UTAS spokesman said a representative spoke to owners on Wednesday.

"The university has engaged with traders and other stakeholders in the Midtown precinct over the period that proposals were being developed for an inner-city campus," the spokesman said.

"When we became aware of specific trader concerns about the parklet on Melville St, we committed to engage further."

"Our goal is to develop a university campus which supports the city – including small business and retail – and builds upon the qualities people find so special about it now."

"We embarked on this project because there was strong

support for this sort of amenity in the city," University of Tasmania vice-chancellor Rufus Black said.

Property owner Denis McLoughlin, who spearheaded the fight against the proposal, said business owners wouldn't feel safe until the development application was completely

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UTAS halts park plans

JUDY AUGUSTINE

BUSINESS operators in Hobart are not letting their guard down after a University of Tasmania development application for a small park on Melville St was put on hold.

Under the proposal, a lane of traffic on Melville St would be closed to make way for the green spaces.

The plans were part of the UTAS campus relocation from Sandy Bay to the Hobart CBD.

The development application was set to go before the Hobart City Council planning committee on Monday.

But last week business owners voiced anger at the proposal, claiming it would result in fewer parking spots in the

Traders express relief but vow to keep up the fight



An artist's impression of the proposed parklet.

area and subsequently affect their trade.

The university has now paused the application to do further consultation, admitting there was opposition.

"We embarked on this project because there was strong

support for this sort of amenity in the city," University of Tasmania vice-chancellor Rufus Black said.

"As plans developed, that translated into support for the parklet and the chance to test this approach – but there is clearly opposition, so we need to pause."

"It has become clear that we need to have a deeper conversation with the community."

Property owner Denis McLoughlin, who spearheaded the fight against the proposal, said business owners wouldn't feel safe until the development application was completely

withdrawn. "Melville St is still under threat," Mr McLoughlin said.

"I believe they will have another go. It needs to be completely withdrawn and the business owners of Hobart need to be promised that they will never try and steal our street again, or anybody else's."

Mr McLoughlin said the community would be prepared when the issue arose again.

"We will form a group so when the spruikers from UTAS try again, this time we'll all know about it and we will be able to have the right information for everybody," he said.

"Our businesses cannot afford to lose on-street parking," Country Women's Association gift shop manager Johanna Warren said she was relieved to hear the DA had been put on pause.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she said. "It would've been nicer to hear it had been withdrawn."

Like Mr McLoughlin, Ms Warren also did not think the issue was over.

"It sounds like they will, it would be disappointing if they do," she said.

Ms Warren said there were other options UTAS could consider.

"Sandy Bay's got plenty of greenery, is it really necessary to move?" she said.

"There's so many off-street areas for people to sit that are always empty, why do we need to take off more street parking?"

Professor Black said the university would "work to ensure its plans aligned with the City of Hobart's new precinct plan."

"We are committed to enhancing what makes Hobart special by making very sustainable, human-scaled buildings that make that higher education more accessible to more people and enhance the vibrancy and life of the city," Professor Black said.

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CBD claims rile council

KENJI SATO

HOBART City Council has hit back at accusations it is "pressuring" shopkeepers out of the inner city to make way for the University of Tasmania.

The complaints were made at Monday's council meeting by Confederation of Greater Hobart Business chairwoman Louise Bloomfield.

Ms Bloomfield said she and other business owners had been told by council staff that if they didn't like UTAS mov-

We're being pressured over UTAS, say traders

ing next to them, they could always relocate.

She also said many shopkeepers faced the implicit pressure of "financial ruin" if they did not reallocate their businesses.

"I ask that the Hobart City Council please provide the ratepayers of Hobart an explanation of how it is that small business owners can be treated

with such utter contempt," she said.

"Why is it that traders' contributions are considered less worthy than a near-billion-dollar entity like UTAS.

"Why are traders being pressured to move at all?" Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds hit back at the suggestion that council was pressuring businesses to leave the CBD.

Ms Reynolds said council had to balance the needs of students, shoppers, tourists, workers, businesses, and healthcare staff needing to access the inner city.

"There is no doubt that the city is undergoing a significant period of growth and transition, and with this there will be change," she said.

"The council cannot, and

will not, dictate what small businesses should do and where they should or could conduct business from."

CWA Hobart's Johanna Warren said the group feared being squeezed out of its Elizabeth St address because of the lack of parking caused by UTAS.

She said many of their customers, donors and volunteers

had stopped turning up because of how difficult it was to find a spot.

"With these new parklets out here we have seen a decline, particularly in our elderly long-term customers," she said.

"It's all well and good to have people come once every six months, but we used to have them coming every week.

"They don't come because the city is so unwelcoming if you drive a car now."

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UTAS parklet development for Melville St draws ire of shop Traders see red over uni plan to green city heart

JUDY AUGUSTINE

BUSINESS owners are frustrated by plans for a small park on Melville St, and fear it will reduce trade.

A group of more than 30 business owners and operators is against the proposal, the development application for which is now open for representations.

The DA lodged by the University of Tasmania involves closing one lane of traffic to make way for the parklet and includes planters, street furniture, power and lighting.

The university hopes to introduce more green space to the CBD (inset) as part of its masterplan to move its campus from Sandy Bay to the city.

CBD property owner Denis McLoughlin said many feared the parklet would come at the expense of on-street parking.

"They're taking 18 carparks out of Melville St," Mr McLoughlin said.

"This will have a flow-on effect for every shop in the CBD."



He said apart from one shop owner, few knew about the plan.

"Everybody in every shop we've been to hadn't heard about it, hadn't been consulted and are not happy they're going to lose their important street lane," he said.

Mr McLoughlin believed there was a plan to "reduce the number of cars in the CBD."

"They're on an agenda to get rid of cars out of the city, but cars are people," he said.

A parklet was installed on Eliza-

beth St at Midtown, but Mr McLoughlin had doubts about the benefits.

"That's cost the local businesses here six on-street carparks," he said.

"They're great for the night-time eateries but all day they sit empty, they're usually only used by smokers.

Country Women's Association gift shop manager Johanna Warren said parklets on Elizabeth St had already caused problems.

"We've already noticed a decline in the city since the dining decks have been installed," Ms Warren said.

"We just don't see the people we used to see on a regular basis. We've got one lovely couple that have been coming to us for 50-odd years and they've stopped because they just cannot get a park outside."

Ms Warren predicted more spontaneous shoppers would be less inclined to pop in.

Ms Warren feared for the future of the business.

"The Country Women's Association gift shop has been here for 79 years," she said.

"If this goes ahead we don't think we'll last."

Grant McCarthy, owner of Elizabeth St store Easy Sew, said many customers who visited the store needed to be able to easily access their vehicles.

"We've got a demographic of customers that fall into the middle-aged, elderly category," Mr McCarthy said.

"They find it harder to walk distances carrying things.

He said a key part of the business was sewing machine maintenance and repair, and that the machines were too heavy to carry for longer distances.

Mr McCarthy was disappointed in the consultation process.

"I've actually had a university rep come in here and he basically said we're putting a park at the end, it'll be up the road, and that was it," he said.

He was concerned the university

would install more parklets in the future. "When we read a bit further in the proposal, they're replicating it further on this street (Melville Street, outside Easy Sew) down the track as well," Mr McCarthy said.

A spokeswoman for the City of Hobart said representations can be made until November 23.

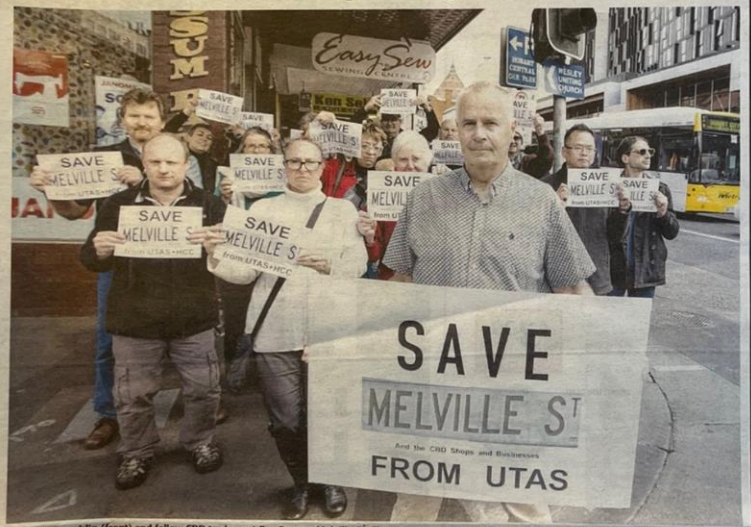
A UTAS spokesman said it had consulted a range of people on the proposal. "We've consulted publicly on the temporary parklet proposal with a range of stakeholders including mid-town traders, immediate neighbours and nearby emergency services," he said.

"The concept is for a temporary, reversible project that aims to deliver some of what people told us they wanted in the city - more greenery, activation and street furniture.

"We understand and respect that people might have reservations and we will be looking to speak with concerned traders in coming days."

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owners who fear lost parking will hurt business



Denis McLoughlin (front) and fellow CBD traders, at Ezy Sew on Melville St. Shop owners are angry at UTAS plans for the street. Picture: Eddie Safarik