

# **‘NO’ VOTE CLIPS UTAS**

## **Poll verdict prompts rethink on campus plans**

THE University of Tasmania is rethinking plans for its Sandy Bay campus after Hobart ratepayers voted overwhelmingly against its plan to relocate to the city’s CBD.

The vote to support the move was 25.62 per cent, with 74.38 per cent against. After the counting of 32,002 votes in the elector poll was completed on Saturday, the University Council conceded its “consultation and engagement has not been successful”.

Vice-chancellor Rufus Black (pictured) said the university would work with the Hobart City Council on its future.

“A clear message is that the future of the Sandy Bay campus is important for Hobart as well as the university, so we will work with the City of Hobart as the planning authority on the best way forward,” he said.

“To allow for this, we are withdrawing our current planning scheme amendment for Sandy Bay.”

# UTAS RETHINKS CAMPUS FUTURE

## RATEPAYERS OVERWHELMINGLY REJECT RELOCATION PLANS

SUE BAILEY AND JUDY AUGUSTINE

THE University of Tasmania is rethinking plans for its Sandy Bay campus, which included building 2700 new homes, after Hobart ratepayers voted overwhelmingly against its plan to relocate to the Hobart CBD.

The vote to support the move was 25.62 per cent with 74.38 per cent against.

After the counting of 32,002 votes in the elector poll was completed, the University Council conceded its “consultation and engagement has not been successful” and it was “sorry this has not worked well for Hobart.”

Opponents of the move lashed UTAS and called for it to abandon the city move.

Vice-Chancellor Rufus Black said the university would work with the Hobart City Council on its future.

“We have clearly heard the perspective of those who voted in the Hobart City Council elector poll, and we recognise that councillors have been elected in part to address the issue of the University’s plans for the CBD and Sandy Bay,” Prof Black said.

“A clear message is that the future of the Sandy Bay campus is important for Hobart as well as the University, so we will work with the City of Hobart as the planning authority on the best way forward.

“To allow for this, we are withdrawing our current planning scheme amendment for Sandy Bay.”

Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds said the university had a lot of work to do “to reflect on these results”.

“Their challenge is to modify their plans and ambitions to reflect a strong community aspiration to keep an educational campus at Sandy Bay.

“I’m sure everyone wants our only university to survive and thrive and not to undermine their role as a significant employer and educator. It’s

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important that the UTAS proposals have a social licence in its host community, so there needs to be a significant rethink.”

Barrister Greg Barns SC, who made submission to the Legislative Inquiry into the move described the vote as “extraordinary”.

“The obscene expenditure of taxpayers’ funds on shallow PR and mindless marketing should be investigated by the Legislative Council inquiry,” he said.

Save UTAS Campus chair Pam Sharpe said the university needed to listen to electors and abandon its plans.

“The elector poll has been emphatic in its result,” Prof Sharpe said.

“Heads should roll as a result of such a disastrous outcome.

“If UTAS management had any respect for the community, it should abandon its relocation project now. At the same time, the parliament should order an immediate and independent inquiry into this debacle.

“This is unprecedented and a government, council or educational institution would ignore it at their peril.”

The vote is not legally binding, the university isn’t required to cease its move based on the result.

UTAS had wanted to split the Sandy Bay campus into five precincts and include a range of housing options including 2700 new homes.

The elector poll was held after a petition by Save UTAS Campus garnered more than 1000 signatures within a few weeks.

susan.bailey@news.com.au