

A WAY FORWARD FOR UTAS

RESTORE SANDY BAY AS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CAMPUS

A BRIEFING PAPER PREPARED BY **SaveUtas**

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The natural landscape of the Sandy Bay Campus



The Melville Street location of 'The Forest', new home to 3000 students

1. UTAS IS LOSING STUDENTS

- “In 2022 more than 30% of Tasmanian students chose to enrol at mainland universities – an increase of more than 70% over the preceding decade. **Our best and brightest students are leaving the State in ever increasing numbers.**” (Independent MP David O’Byrne, The Mercury, Monday 26 August 2024)
- UTAS Council admitted that Tasmanian students have “**a perception that universities off-island provide a better student experience**” than UTAS. (30 August 2023, UTAS Council minutes 6.2)
- The UTAS STEM Precinct Detailed Business Case (2025) says a multidisciplinary campus leads to “greater student enrolments” and that “the colocation of STEM with other faculties at Sandy Bay would provide students with greater access to inter-disciplinary learning thus enhancing the appeal of STEM courses.” UTAS simply ignores the advice of its own experts.

Grass is greener for students in Victoria

Academics in bid to stem UTAS move
Sandy Bay must stay, minister told

Concern for state's law system as academics leave, University of Tasmania 'moves away' from 'intimate' teaching

Students the victims of uni's strategy

ANGRY STUDENTS
Students at the University of Tasmania say they feel unheard, ahead of proposed staff redundancies and course restructuring.

Headlines: used throughout this paper were sourced from local media, including The Mercury Newspaper and ABC Online News

2. BREAKING UP A FINE MULTIDISCIPLINARY CAMPUS IS ILLOGICAL

- When UTAS was planning to move the entire Sandy Bay campus to the city it purchased two properties, the former Forestry Building and the Freedom Furniture building. It then spent \$131M on refurbishments. The refurbished building will be called “The Forest”.
- The abandonment of the city relocation project left UTAS with a dilemma: sell ‘The Forest’ building and put the sale proceeds into the Sandy Bay campus or find a use for it.
- The UTAS Law School refused to move into the building, citing design deficiencies and its remoteness from the Sandy Bay campus.
- UTAS now intends to locate 3000 Humanities, Social Science, Business and Economics students there. All were faculties traditionally part of the Sandy Bay multidisciplinary campus. Moving them unnecessarily destroys UTAS’s multidisciplinary campus.
- There is no logical reason to break up the Sandy Bay campus by locating Humanities, Social Science and Business and Economics in the city, other than to find a use for ‘The Forest’. ‘The Forest’ building is simply a remnant of UTAS’s abandoned plan to relocate the entire campus to the city.

**Academics
blast UTAS**

**Uni staff
attack
campus
strategy**

Plan fatally flawed: survey

Union slams uni plans

NTEU threatens to launch industrial action over UTAS business school review

**Students fight to save
UTAS ‘beating heart’**

3. A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CAMPUS IS GOOD FOR STUDENTS

- **Students need easy access to the Sandy Bay campus's facilities.** The 3000 students in Humanities, Social Sciences and Business/Economics will have to bus from the city to the Sandy Bay campus whenever they want access to:

Free parking	The Morris Miller Library	Co-located industry
Other faculties	Lecture theatres	Space for student events
The Unigym	The Stanley Burbury Theatre	Lazenbys Cafe
Sports grounds	The UTAS corporate office	An attractive landscape

- **The opportunity to study on a multidisciplinary campus is important for many students.** Students thrive on interactions with students from a range of disciplines according to the STEM Precinct Detailed Business Case.
- **Experience shows lack of parking and open plan staff offices** cause staff and students to stay away. In the past 5 years the Business/Economics School who have been in rented city open office spaces and have opted instead to work from home. Enrolments have fallen and in 2024 staff were retrenched.
- **Students and staff will have to bus between Sandy Bay campus and 'The Forest' in the city.** UTAS's solution to the city access problem is for students and staff to park at Sandy Bay and bus to and from the city. This will particularly affect students (almost all Law students) who study combined degrees.

"The Morris Miller Library gives off a study/activity vibe that is good for students and staff, there is no equivalent space like that in the city."

"My heart bleeds for the students that plead with me every semester saying this is not what they wanted from a university experience. They want to hang out on campus - make friends - work together in the library - students need to belong."

"Being spread out across multiple locations means that there will be less opportunity for students to meet and socialise and form networks, and when they do meet other students, it is much less likely that they will meet students from very different disciplines. The physical separation of disciplines will also discourage interdisciplinary study. Thus students will be less likely to encounter the diverse perspectives that are one of the most valuable aspects of university education."

Quotes: UTAS Academics, NTEU workplace survey, 2025

The Morris Millar Library



4. STAFF AND STUDENTS WANT A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CAMPUS

What do staff say?

The results of a comprehensive NTEU workspace survey released in February 2025 found staff overwhelmingly prefer the Sandy Bay campus and have significant concerns about the workspace design and the UTAS plan to have Sandy Bay faculties in the city.

The survey revealed:

- Only 15% support moving entirely to the CBD
- 74% of staff who currently work on the Sandy Bay campus report that their workspaces are suitable compared to just 38% who currently work in open offices in the city
- The majority of staff surveyed believe the plan to relocate to the city is “fatally flawed”.
- Significant concerns about open plan workspaces impacting productivity, teaching quality, and research capabilities

NTEU 2025 Staff Survey Comments included:

- *‘I visit the campus, and I’m filled with the energy of a youthful campus full of new ideas and excited people. I the return to the CBD and feel like I’m not in a university. The CBD is not inspiring or energetic. It has no community.’*
- *‘The new ‘ campus’ model will further fracture the student body, further weakening the student experience of ‘university life’ ‘*
- *‘It will make staff and students feel even more disconnected than they are currently.’*
- *‘...I prefer a university that is in one big campus (at Sandy Bay).’*
- *‘Students need a student community. The university make lots of noise about not ‘siloing’ staff to encourage cross communication... but they are happy to silo their students into isolated schools.’*
- *‘Doesn’t allow for cross-discipline students who need to move between campuses for lectures or tutorials.’*
- *... ‘It’s the experience - its belonging to a community (for staff and students). I feel like I’m in a permanent stage of grief working in the CBD - constantly sad - just going through the motions.’*
- *‘How accessible will these campuses be for our students? It does not encourage studying across disciplinary boundaries (e.g., science communication - Sandy Bay for stem and the city for journalism/arts?)’*

See Appendix 2 for more staff comments

‘Low morale’ as UTAS staff go online to vent

Uni to cut staff, courses

Rob Inglis
The University of Tasmania is
Sweeping changes proposal angers UTAS workers
Covid peak of \$10.96m in 2019.
National Tertiary Education
Union Tasmanian secretary Dr



What do students say?

Surveys reveal student dissatisfaction with UTAS

In the 2024 Australian Good Universities Guide (based on the Student Experience Survey conducted for the Australian government) UTAS rates as **41st out of 42 Australian universities for student satisfaction** with “overall experience” and 38th of 42 universities for “student support”.

Only 33.8% of UTAS students felt they were “engaged” as a learner.

SaveUTASArts student survey, July 2025, student comments include:

- ‘Don’t move the campus.’
- ‘Keep the campus at Sandy Bay.’
- ‘Upgrade the buildings and keep Arts together at Sandy Bay.’
- ‘I have enjoyed the environment of the Sandy Bay campus because of the spirit of the place. I want to see that spirit protected but already it is dissipating as the campus is being divided up and disunified.’
- ‘Give me back the campus life, not business buildings which are not suitable for student campus life.’

See Appendix 1 for Staff, Academics and Student media articles on UTAS’s plans

Students at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) have said they feel unheard, [ahead of proposed staff](#) redundancies and program restructuring.

‘Students shouldn’t have to pay for an on-campus experience, but not have it delivered’

Proposed University of Tasmania cuts spark outcry from fee-paying students

togatus_ UTAS students are speaking out about the CBD move, and they’re not feeling heard. From lost campus culture to endless bus rides, our latest piece dives into the reality behind the glossy plans. 📖 🚌 Read the full story in the new Togatus Semesterly, link in bio.

5. SELL THE UNSUITABLE ‘THE FOREST’ BUILDING TO FUND REFURBISHMENT OF THE SANDY BAY CAMPUS

- **The design is inadequate and too remote from the Sandy Bay campus facilities.** Staff say this will lead to UTAS losing enrolments and academic staff.
- **The design of ‘The Forest’ is not suitable for larger events and lectures.** The Law School refused to locate there because of that. There is no lecture theatre – students will need to bus to Sandy Bay if there is a lecture involving more than 42 people. There is no theatre – students will need to go to the Stanley Burbury Theatre at Sandy Bay.
- **The design is unsuitable for academics.** Because of the small size of The Forest, academic staff won’t have offices and will work in open plan areas. For their research activities and personal libraries UTAS has told them to operate from their homes. There is no space for academics to store books and other materials. Open plan impedes their engagement with students and other staff. It will discourage the recruitment and retention of academic staff.

The refusal of UTAS to liquidate the Forest Building prevents UTAS from accessing about \$200M (the estimated sale proceeds) of capital that could be used to refurbish the Sandy Bay campus.

“The loss of office space in Forestry will be devastating.”

‘The Forest’ in Melville Street



“They have designed a building without proper consideration of staff needs, hence the push back from staff in working in the area.”

“University is about more than content acquisition. If we want content, we can get it for free on YouTube. We want community. New experiences. New friendships. This doesn’t happen in a distributed design.”



“I just don’t understand why so much money has been spent on doing up old buildings in the city when they could have fixed up the buildings in Sandy Bay. It will make it even harder to do cross disciplinary studies too. So many of my students say, ‘If I am to study at a CBD campus, then I would rather go to Melbourne, Sydney, or Queensland. I study here in Tasmania as this is a GREEN campus’.

Quotes: UTAS Staff, NTEU Staff Workplace Survey, February 2025

6. BETTER UTAS GOVERNANCE WILL LEAD TO BETTER UTAS DECISION MAKING

The decline of UTAS and the waste of hundreds of millions on property development results from by poor management decisions arising from a defective governance structure.

UTAS has a history of poor decision-making

- UTAS spent around \$400M on its failed city relocation project, to the detriment of teaching and research.
- UTAS neglected the Sandy Bay campus. UTAS diverted to the failed city relocation project money meant for maintenance and renewal of the Sandy Bay campus.
- UTAS wants to sell essential upper campus STEM facilities yet has no money or land to replace them.
- UTAS's plan for the refurbishment Sandy Bay campus plan is wasteful, extravagant, unfunded and unrealistic. UTAS has no alternative plan.
- UTAS has maintained a bullying management culture which is frequently disclosed in internal staff surveys. The Law School lost two thirds of its academic staff. The latest staff survey, June 2025, described an 'unsafe place to work'.
- A Legislative Council report (December 2024) found that UTAS has a poor governance structure and a lack of accountability.

Breaking Up a Fine Multidisciplinary Campus is Another Bad Decision. It is self-defeating to destroy a feature which UTAS's own 2025 STEM Business Plan says is essential in order to promote enrolments, particularly in STEM courses.

The Answer: UTAS should sell 'The Forest' and return the schools of Humanities, Social Sciences, Business and Economics to their traditional home at Sandy Bay.

Call to reform UTAS governance, The Mercury, Thursday 26 December 2024

Call for uni law reform amid 'core role shift'

David Killick

The laws governing the University of Tasmania need reviewing to address a drift away from its core role as an educational institution, a parliamentary committee has found.

Legislative Council Select Committee on the Provisions of the University of Tasmania Act has handed down its final report after 151 submissions and 12 days of public hearings.

The committee was established amid disquiet over the university's planned move into the Hobart CBD, although it did not examine that decision directly.

The final report found the university's mission appeared to be changing.



Independent MLC for Nelson Meg Webb.

"Concern was expressed that the university appears to prioritise commercial over community interests in its core functions, with a significant focus on corporatisation, which undermines the university's core role and identity," the report said.

"The committee received evidence of a perception the university has deviated from its core functions of education and research specified in Sec-

tion 6 of the Act, and has shifted to a more commercial focus."

It noted evidence of centralised decision-making and a decline in consultation.

"It was clear from the evidence provided that a substantial number of people connected with the university, including students, alumni, and current and past academics, are highly concerned and distressed by aspects of its governance, management and strategic direction," the report noted.

"There is a clearly expressed deficit of trust in the current university governance, management and decision-making."

"Comprehensive review and amendment of the Act, with

key changes to the governance structure and accountability mechanisms, presents an opportunity to address this deficit of trust in a foundational way."

The committee recommended a comprehensive review of the University of Tasmania Act. There were 19 further recommendations for specific aspects of the Act.

The report found that at the same time as there was mistrust, staff at the university were fearful of raising issues.

"Significant evidence was presented pointing to a culture at the university in which staff and students felt constrained in speaking up or raising issues due to a fear of repercussions or reprisals," the report said.

"A casualised workforce felt

this vulnerability even more acutely. The use of 'gagging clauses' further added to a sense the workplace culture would not tolerate views counter to management.

"It was clear that current complaints management processes within the university were not regarded as sufficient or effective, nor were the agencies of external recourse for complaints – the Ombudsman and Integrity Commission – regarded as effective in resolving those complaints."

The report noted that the university was alone in the nation in being able to dispose of land granted by the Crown or paid for by public money without legislative restrictions.

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See Appendix 3 for more media reports on the findings of the Legislative Council Inquiry into the provisions of UTAS Act.

Appendix 1 - Staff, Academics and Student Opinion

1. Staff Opinion - A report on the NTEU staff survey results, The Mercury, Monday 3 March 2025

Uni staff attack campus strategy

Plan fatally flawed: survey

Simon McGuire

A new survey of University of Tasmania (UTAS) staff has found that 51 per cent of them believe the Southern Transformation project is "fatally flawed".

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has released the results of a survey of 182 UTAS staff members.

The survey also found that only 15 per cent supported a complete relocation of the Hobart campus to the CBD.

However, that move is no longer on the cards.

"As announced last year, the university is not planning a complete move into the city; we are working to deliver a \$500m investment in STEM facilities at Sandy Bay," UTAS Southern Tasmania Pro-Vice Chancellor Nicholas Farrelly said. "The plan for STEM at Sandy Bay was developed with staff, students and stakeholders and is supported by the Tasmanian University Student Association, the state government and the Hobart City Council, among others."

"We have consulted with staff and students about our spaces as we have planned, delivered and moved into new campus facilities in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, and we will continue to do so."

The survey also found that of the 97 Sandy Bay-based staff who responded, 74 per cent reported their workspace met

their needs, compared with just 38 per cent of the 37 respondents who work in CBD locations.



Ruth Barton

NTEU Tasmanian Division Secretary Ruth Barton said she was surprised by those figures.

"The narrative the university spins is that Sandy Bay's old and decrepit and we need to move out of there and move into the CBD where it's going to be shiny, new, sparkling and great," Dr Barton said.

"And what people commented on was the difficulties they had in the CBD was about having open-plan offices and the difficulty this posed for university-type work, which is deep-thinking work."

Dr Barton said that the survey results sent a strong message to UTAS.

"There's not many people who have a lot of faith that the university's current plan is going to work."

"I think they need to reconsider what they're doing, and that's the message that's come through from the survey."

The NTEU says it will release survey results from UTAS staff based in the state's northern half in the coming weeks.

2. Academic Opinion

UTAS Emeritus Professor Michael Bennett challenged the UTAS plan to break up the campus and the reported inadequacies and limitations of the Forestry building refurbishment. The Mercury Newspaper, 27 February 2025.

Proposed move to city campus would create host of

In arguing that UTAS should be allowed to dispose of the Sandy Bay site to fund its developments in the city, Dean Winter was evidently impressed by continuing work on the old Forestry Building, in Melville St, and artist's impressions of its future use.

Setting aside the popular vote, a massive cost overrun, and the lack of a credible plan, Winter assured members in the House of Assembly (Proceedings, August 7, 2024) that he would have enjoyed being a student in the new building, with the

Many people in Tasmania and beyond are baffled by UTAS's decision to give up its greatest assets, writes **Michael Bennett**

experience there promising to be superior to his own at Sandy Bay. He overlooked the point that the new facilities could have been achieved at lower cost and in timelier fashion on the main campus.

Many people in Tasmania and beyond are baffled by UTAS's decision to give up its greatest assets. Apart from the site's magnificence, the availability of space to grow, adapt and respond to new opportunities give it considerable advantages in the highly competitive world of higher education.

For some disciplines, there are advantages in a city location, but a basic problem in moving the bulk of the university to the CBD is that it locks in modes of teaching and learning that may prove transient. The teaching spaces in the new building are for 20-40 students. The lack of lecture theatres (and cafeterias) rule out the possibility of all students in a class coming together for a live lecture. Live lectures are now a selling point in prestigious mainland universities.

The Sandy Bay campus has always been a drawcard for staff and students on the mainland and overseas. Professors and lecturers were able to assume offices with windows and postgraduates dedicated work-space, all of which are unfeasible in Melville St.

Above all, there is the natural beauty of the Sandy Bay campus. I wonder if anyone told Mr Winter that in 2020 it was ranked as one of the 10 most photogenic campuses in the world.

problems for students, staff and everyone in CBD

putting up plaques to celebrate it. For walkers around the campus during lockdown, the plaques held the promise of better days. Then, in a matter of weeks, someone in authority had them taken down.

According to UTAS (The Mercury, October 27, 2024), the Forestry Building in Melville St will be completed early in 2026 and welcoming some 300 staff and 3000 students. Given staff cuts and declining enrolments, the numbers do not seem credible. It is certainly hard to imagine 3300 people being

accommodated in a city block not much bigger than the site, on which the mothballed Student Union stands, in Sandy Bay.

Given the internal lay-out of the building, divided into small classrooms, pods and work-stations, UTAS appears to be banking on only a small fraction of staff and students using the building at any one time. The assumption is that on-line teaching, rather than being a useful option and add-on, will be the norm. Yet there are signs of a countervailing trend. A concern for the wellbeing of

young people and an awareness of the implications of AI would suggest that social interaction and face-to-face learning will become more, rather than less important.

The prospect of even a thousand staff and students coming in and out of the Forest Building for an hour or so each day should worry everyone in the CBD. It will significantly increase congestion and render the Melville St carpark unusable as a public utility.

If all goes according to the management's plan, students in Arts and other faculties based in Sandy Bay, who are commencing or resuming their studies, will be the last cohort of Tasmanians to have the option of studying at a green field, multi-disciplinary campus in their home state – a campus that offers space and facilities for study, the chance to meet their classmates and teachers in person, the opportunity to join clubs and societies, reinvigorate the university union, hang out in cafeterias, walk in the bushland, and chill out on the lawns.

I do hope that this cohort of students will make the most of a genuine campus experience. In a year's time, if the UTAS plan proceeds, they will be lining up in Melville St to check into the new facilities, searching in vain for familiar faces among the milling crowd, perhaps lingering to contemplate the dome-lit wonderland, and then probably returning home to their laptops and possibly reconsidering their options.

Michael Bennett is a former long-serving Professor of History and now an Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tasmania.

3. Student Opinion

UTAS Student, Anaya Shepherd, gives the student view in her article, *The Future of UTAS, A Dying Culture & Ignored Voices* (Togatus Magazine, August 2025)

Extracts from the article:

The isolation that comes with bouncing from campus to campus is also a big problem that has risen from the move. Most days I have to leave class as soon as it is over to get to my next class on another campus. There is little time to make friends or socialise which becomes very lonely. It takes the fun out of studying when you have to do it alone.

As a UTAS student myself, all of my knowledge of the move has come from doing my own personal research. Which is important but there is an expectation of students that plans as significant as this one, which will affect future and current studies, would prompt the university to communicate openly and directly with students. When speaking with other students about the move the biggest concern is the lack of communication. Many students do think that there are ways in which this move can be more comfortable for students and staff but there is no input being requested from students.

Socialisation, ease of access to resources and a sense of community are parts of university culture that make studying enjoyable. Students worry that these things will be lost as a result of the move. There are many suggestions that the student body has for how to rectify the issues that students are currently facing and students who are already located in the CBD are concerned about how those who are to move in the future will fare.

Having done my first year of university elsewhere, I have a more unique perspective of UTAS. Many students have nothing to compare their time at university to as they have only studied at one university. I commend UTAS for their current facilities and equipment, as a media student, I get to learn hands-on. The Hedberg and the School of Creative Arts are both spaces where I feel I can learn and explore with my future profession in mind. The equipment supplied for student learning allows me and my fellow classmates to have the practice and time of investigation required to prepare us for the future.

UTAS has done a wonderful job at this but there are a variety of issues which dampen the awe that I initially had. My commute to campus is the most stressful part of my day and some days since I have classes on multiple campuses, I have to take five buses in my complete commute. I started the semester getting the UniHopper but I quickly realized that the available times were too close to class time and I often got to class late if there was slight traffic or anything else occurring in the city.

APPENDIX 2 – STAFF OPINION -

1. THE NTEU WORKPLACE SURVEY, FEBRUARY 2025 - Additional Staff Comments

Comments about workspaces

(Note: Comments about working in open offices are from Business and Economics staff who were relocated into rented open offices in the CBD in 2021. 'The Forest' also has open office spaces.)

- I work in both locations, and I love the atmosphere on the Sandy Bay campus. I can't explain what makes it, but I really enjoy being on the University grounds separate to just the buildings. I don't feel that same atmosphere when I attend the Hobart CBD - probably because the buildings are isolated and do not have the same sense of a gathering space for students and staff - there is a sense of belonging and connection that I have always felt on University grounds both at the Sandy Bay and Launceston campuses as well as at other University campuses where I have worked and studied in other states. They are spaces you feel welcome to spend time in and where the University holds barbecues or hosts live music or markets or O-week activities or other events that create a sense of community, and my worry would be that this would be lost by moving away from the Sandy Bay campus because Hobart does not have that same kind of space.
- *Difficult to focus for long periods of time due to being in an open office space with many distractions, interruptions, and noises. Also, it is difficult to have private conversations with fellow staff and students.*
- I can't concentrate at work. It is difficult to concentrate in shared spaces when designing teaching or writing research papers.
- *I coordinate a program that requires sensitivity and confidentiality. I work in an open plan office space so often my colleagues are privy to this personal and sensitive information. This is not ideal ...*
- I have limited desk space; I cannot put up a 'Do Not Disturb' sign when I want to focus on a task as I'm in a 4-person office that is embedded in an open-plan space. I can't look out of a window and think about tasks. People pop by all the time. People have phone conversations, informal chats. It's impossible to focus.
- *The people who have moved to the city have been heavily disadvantaged: 1. There is no individual office for each and every one..... 2. We have been told that in a few months' time to park in the city. Staff will have to pay a much more to park than the sandy Bay campus staff. 3. Sharing the open space with other staff. It's very difficult to concentrate especially if you have to do research.*
- I greatly appreciate having an individual office with bookshelves and a door. I often need to close my door to have confidential conversations with colleagues and students, and to focus on research. Bookshelves allow me access to my working library very promptly, and I use this working library on a daily basis, often consulting multiple volumes a day in the course of my research and teaching.
- *I work from campus because I value and need my office space to do my job. I do not have a spare room at home with a desk. I also often have young children around me if I have to work from home. Home is not a space that is conducive to working deeply, so I come to campus and work in the peace of my private office because I can be productive. The privacy of my office directly enables my research progress. I will NOT be able to research in an open-plan or shared office space. I find it impossible to do deep thinking, intense concentration, and the deep work related to ACADEMIC WRITING in a space where there are distractions from other people working, conversations happening around me, and where I can't speak aloud to myself as I work my way through tricky passages of text that I am reading or writing. An open-plan office will be the death of my research productivity.*

Comments about a distributed campus

- *Adding to congestion in the city is ridiculous and bound to have very negative consequences unless subsidised and very frequent public transport is implemented at the same time as the move. None of the people making these decisions catch buses and they probably have designated parking spots. They have little concept of the reality of traffic, travel, parking costs, stress etc*
- I think the university values connection with people/disciplines. This will become harder to achieve with a distributed campus model.
- *It is a messy compromise, and Social Sciences and Humanities are bearing the brunt of it, as the 2 main schools that will be moved. I think it would have been a better and braver decision for a complete change of tack and to sell the forestry building, along with the other CBD sites. I particularly resent the 100% positive spin that has been put on the changed plan - but not saying 'sorry, we got it wrong and we are changing our mind and doing something different, which is not a good outcome for your Schools' - it invalidates our negative feelings and responses.*
- Students need a student community. The university make lots of noise about not 'siloing' staff to encourage cross communication... but they are happy to silo their students into isolated schools.
- *They should move more schools back to Sandy Bay, especially CoBE and CALE. This is not good for staff and not good for students and their engagement with the university, peer support, academic support etc.*
- We have already seen a drop in number of students attending business classes in the city and this will only deteriorate further due to the lack of adequate teaching spaces in current and future designed buildings. There is not a single space in the City large enough to hold student orientation events.



Photo: The Sandy Bay Campus ABC news online

Appendix 3 – UTAS Governance

An article by Meg Webb MLC, who was chair of the Legislative Council Committee Inquiry into the UTAS Act.
The Mercury, Tuesday 1 April 2025

Lessons we all must learn from UTAS

It is essential for development the university successfully delivers, writes **Meg Webb**

The University of Tasmania is a beloved Tasmanian public institution and is of primary importance to the social, economic, cultural and environmental success of our state.

The university holds a special place in shaping Tasmania and many, especially in the south of the state where the university has the longest history, cherish this institution and have a sense of stewardship over it.

From late 2021, in the context of the then-proposed move of the Sandy Bay campus to the Hobart CBD, Rob Valentine, previous member for Hobart, and I began to be flooded with community members raising issues relating to UTAS.

Concerns included: executive management practices, workplace culture, strategic decision-making, facilities management and infrastructure development, funding priorities, loss of key staff and a diminishing quality of student experience.

Many of the issues being raised were not within the direct purview of the parliament, which has no authority to reach into the operational management of the university. However, the appropriate way to explore some of these issues was in examining the suitability of the provisions of the University of Tasmania Act 1992.

The Legislative Council Select Committee, formed to inquire into and report on the provisions of the Act, received extensive evidence in 151 submissions and held 12 days of public hearings, presenting its final report, in December 2024.

Amendments to the Act over time significantly reshaped governance and decision-making power within the university, resulting in a diminishment of consultation, transparency and accountability.

Significant concern, distress and a deficit of trust in the current university governance, management, decision-making, and strategic direction were expressed loud and clear in evidence.

A key matter discussed in the report was tension between the core purposes of a university to create, preserve and transmit knowledge and the recent adoption of a corporate, managerial approach to governance and management.

This was linked to loss of voice and influence in decision-making by university academics, especially on academic matters.

The report includes case studies of recent university decisions

illustrating concerns raised on deficiencies in accountability decision-making.

Evidence pointed to a workplace culture in which staff and students felt constrained in speaking up or raising issues due to a fear of repercussions or reprisals. A casualised workforce felt this vulnerability even more acutely. The use of “gagging” clauses further added to a sense that – views which were counter to management – not be tolerated.

The report recommends government promptly undertake a comprehensive review to update the University of Tasmania Act 1992, including addressing the 19 further recommendations in the report.

Of note, the committee did specifically recommend the Act be amended to provide a constraint, or prohibition, on the university having the power to sell land gifted to it by the state.

During the inquiry, the university identified some areas in which it was already making changes in response to matters raised in evidence.

This demonstrated the inquiry’s merit in providing opportunities for information to be put on the public record, public discussion of concerns, and impetus for improvement.

The Legislative Council will note the report in debate today (Tuesday, April 1). The government’s response will give an indication of the support necessary to progress recommendations.

The university is challenged with providing tertiary education statewide within changing federal funding models, driving the need to pursue other sources of funding.

It is essential for the social, cultural and economic development of the state that the university successfully delivers on its central mission of teaching and research to a level of excellence.

The aim of the final report of the committee and its recommendations is to make the University of Tasmania a better, more robust and accountable institution for our state and its people.

Meg Webb is the independent Member for Nelson



Nelson MLC Meg Webb

THE VOICE OF TASMANIA
MERCURY

HIGHER EDUCATION

Uni reform is long overdue

The parliamentary report into the legislative government of the University of Tasmania raises many interesting points. The Legislative Council Select Committee should be commended for the thoroughness of its work, despite being hampered by more restrictive terms of reference than many in the community would have liked. Nevertheless, the final product is the result of wide consultation and input and will be a useful resource for policymakers.

The inquiry was called amid community concern over plans to move the university's southern campus from Sandy Bay to the CBD. The committee's final report gives an interesting history of how closely legislation establishing the university governed its use of land that it was granted by governments, from the 1889 Tasmanian University Act which established teaching facilities on the Domain to the 1951 Tasmanian University Act which provided for the move to Sandy Bay, to land that was not to be 'sold, mortgaged,

or otherwise disposed of'. That provision disappeared when the current Act was passed in 1992.

While the initial legislation establishing the university was in place for more than 60 years, and the current legislation 32, it is clearly too long since the governing arrangements have been given a thorough review.

The committee report makes clear that the university management's vision for the future is at odds in many respects with staff, students, alumni and the broader community. It paints a picture of a somewhat autocratic management style, with a lack of tolerance for dissenting voices.

The government has rushed legislation into parliament which will have the effect of allowing the university to sell two large tranches of land above Churchill Avenue. In its haste, there was little time for public consultation. Hopefully, this latest committee report will start the conversation about a more considered process and a more widely supported approach to the future of our most important educational institution.



The Sandy Bay Campus

