

Text of Letter to The Mercury Editor – 30 August 2022

In an advertisement in the Sunday Tasmanian (28 August), the University of Tasmania (UTAS) claimed that, from its proposed CBD move, “Local small businesses will benefit, with our staff alone forecast to spend \$15 million a year”. In a note to the ad, the *Urbis City Worker Survey, 2019* is cited as the source of this figure. UTAS’ website reveals that the “\$15 million a year” figure is based upon 1,500 staff members spending \$10,000 each a year, with Urbis again cited.

I lodged a Right to Information (RTI) application with UTAS in April 2022, seeking a copy of Urbis’ report. In May, my application was refused on the basis that a prior decision had been made to release this report publicly within 12 months. When I appealed this decision, I was informed by UTAS’ General Counsel that UTAS had not commissioned the Urbis report, and “due to intellectual property law” it could not make the report public.

I have studied what Urbis say about their Workers Surveys and would ask UTAS the following questions:

- (1) Did Urbis undertake any research for UTAS?
- (2) Did Urbis conduct research in Hobart?
- (3) Did Urbis provide a breakdown – for Hobart – of the \$10,000 a year figure?
- (4) If so, what is that breakdown?
- (5) Can UTAS explain Urbis’ methodology?

I worked in Canberra City for 20 years and \$10,000 seems an absurdly high figure for anyone to be spending each year in a city unless, for example, parking is included. Or, they are very rich.

Given that I drew a blank with my RTI application, I look forward to UTAS’ public response.