

News Tasmania

University of Tasmania considers shifting from prime Sandy Bay site

THE University of Tasmania says it faces a tough decision about whether to stump up \$600-700 million to refurbish 50-year-old buildings at the Sandy Bay campus — or to seek options elsewhere.

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2 min read July 19, 2017 - 6:50PM

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University of Tasmania Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen.

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THE University of Tasmania says it faces a tough decision about whether to stump up \$600-700 million to refurbish 50-year-old buildings at the Sandy Bay campus — or to seek options elsewhere.

It comes as southern Tasmanian mayors believe young people from their council areas are disadvantaged by the difficulty of travelling to Sandy Bay, with several openly supporting a potential CBD shift.

Vice chancellor Peter Rathjen said the buildings at the existing campus were not fit for purpose and a decision would have to be made “quite quickly”.

“The big decision will be whether the University reinvests at Sandy Bay in which case it will be there for another 50 years or whether it chooses to build new facilities elsewhere which gives the opportunity to do something different,” Prof Rathjen said.

“Many of the buildings at Sandy Bay are not fit for purpose for a University of our calibre, and they need to be replaced by buildings the calibre of the Menzies Institute or the IMAS Institute.”

But he said no decision had been made and it was matter for the University council.

Prof Rathjen's revelation comes as momentum builds for a \$400 million STEM centre in the CBD as the centrepiece of a Hobart City Deal with the Federal Government, as revealed by the *Mercury*.

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The Southern Tasmanian Councils Association (STCA) is believed to be close to indicating support for the STEM project as southern Tasmania's major development priority — ahead of the \$490 million replacement Bridgewater Bridge.

STCA spokeswoman Sue Hickey said Brighton, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Huon Valley and Sorell councils had backed the concept of a move after a recent briefing from Prof Rathjen.

If approved, it would see a significant portion of the university's footprint shifted from Sandy Bay into Melville Street.



An artist's impression of the University of Tasmania's proposed STEM precinct on the corner of Argyle and Melville streets in Hobart. Image: UTAS

Sorell mayor Kerry Vincent said a wider central city CBD campus would mean students would be able to catch one bus to the university, rather than transfer to a second bus to travel to Sandy Bay.

“That would cut a fair bit off travelling time and give students more time for study and other activities,” he said.

Ald Hickey said a CBD campus would open the door to private investment into student accommodation, give more impetus to a light rail project to Glenorchy and unlock land values along the rail corridor.

UTAS already has the Medical Science Precinct, the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, 430 units of student accommodation in Melville St and has the \$96 million Hedberg Performing arts centre under construction in Campbell St.

As revealed in the *Mercury*, the STEM centre has received a significant boost, with a study by the Nous Group finding the project would be a catalyst for improved statewide educational and economic outcomes through a Tasmania Innovation Network which would link with nodes in Burnie and Launceston.

Franklin MP Julie Collins said the STEM relocation was a significant opportunity but Liberal Senators had failed to deliver one new project in the Federal Budget.