

NTEU Survey of Members- Southern Campus Move

Report for Prof Rufus Black, Vice-Chancellor, University of Tasmania

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Background

The NTEU surveyed our southern-based members to gauge their opinions on the proposed relocation of UTAS operations into Hobart vs redevelopment of the Sandy Bay campus.

The take-up was very good (48% response) indicating the importance of the issue to our members.

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of support for the City-Centric or the Distributed options (in the same terms as presented in the UTAS displays and materials). They were also asked where they were currently based and invited to provide further comment.

Results

Asked to choose between the City-Centric and the Distributed model, the outcome was stark (75% Distributed; 16% City-Centric; 9% Undecided/Indifferent).

For staff working at Sandy Bay (who comprised $\frac{3}{4}$ of the responses), the preference was slightly more skewed (81% Distributed; 12% City-Centric; 7% Undecided/Indifferent).

For the smaller number of staff working other than at Sandy Bay, the numbers were closer, but not too much (56% Distributed; 28% City-Centric; 17% Undecided/Indifferent).

The open-ended comments provided by members were illuminating. The responses were measured against the statement "*The City-Centric model is preferred over the Distributed model*", > 70% of respondents did not favour the City-Centric model, while < 10% were positively disposed to the City-Centric approach (see Graph 1).

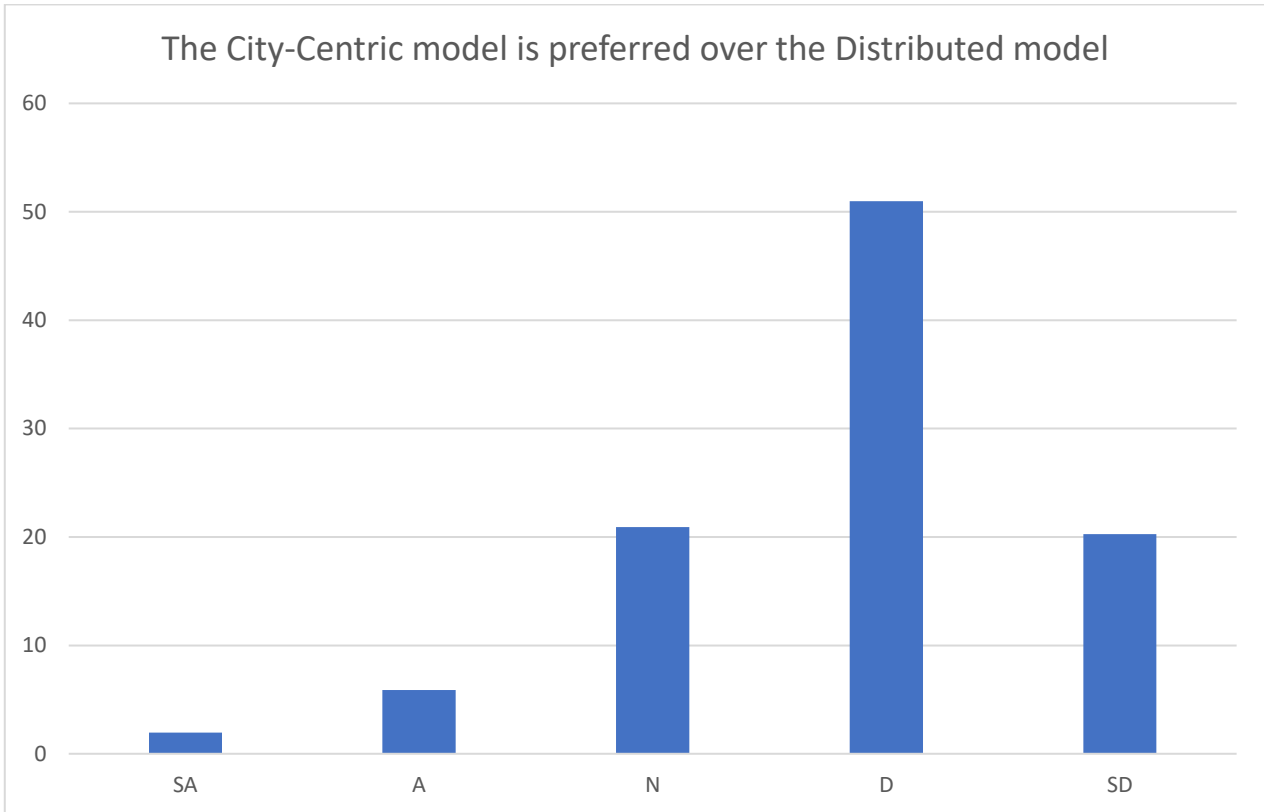
The comments were categorised against 13 emergent themes (detailed description of themes in Table 1). In order of decreasing frequency, the 7 most common themes were:

1. Traffic congestion (vehicle and pedestrian) plus public transport inadequate
2. Parking in city – availability and cost
3. Concerns about buildings - open plan fears; new buildings may not be fit-for-purpose; a series of office blocks doesn't make a campus
4. Identity of Sandy Bay campus will be lost
5. Loss of green space
6. Staff and students will operate in a set of silos
7. The consultation process was not genuine

Only 4% of the comments expressed support for the City-Centric model, although 7% of the comments acknowledged that many buildings at Sandy Bay need redevelopment.

Graph 1

(SA - Strongly Agree; A - Agree; N - Neutral; D - Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree)



Graph 2

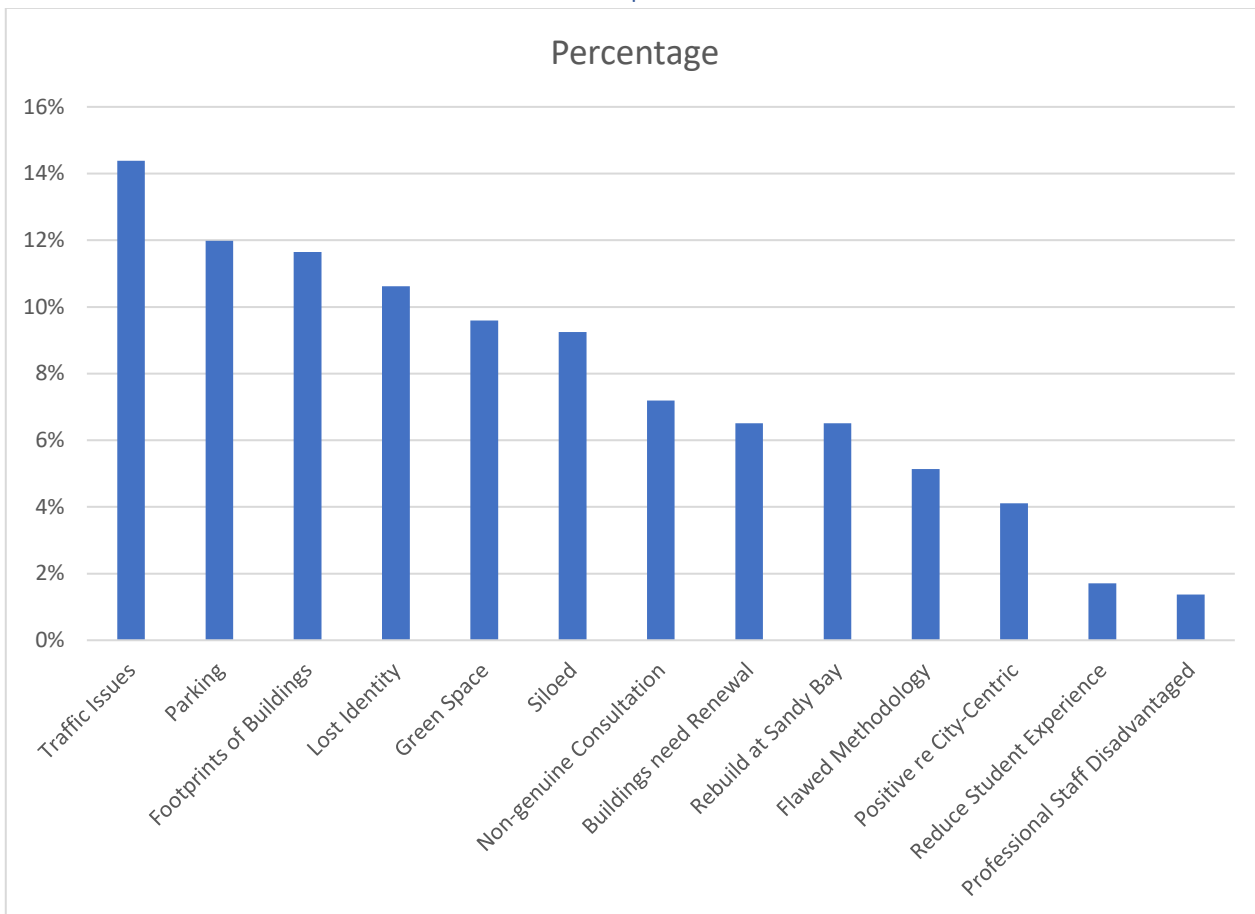


Table 1 – Emergent Themes

1	Parking; cost, lack of availability in CBD
2	Exacerbation of traffic congestion, inadequate public transport system, disagreement that City-Centric model (CCM) would lead to increase use of public transport; city pedestrian congestion.
3	Outcome is pre-determined, consultative process is not genuine.
4	Siloed from other staff and students; students siloed from each other.
5	Flawed methodology used in reports; biased.
6	Sandy Bay Campus has an identity and a sense of place; CCM will lose 'essence' of a University
7	Sandy Bay Campus has abundant and/or quality green space; green space will be limited/non-existent in CCM
8	Concerns with physical footprint of CCM; open plan concerns; concerns new-builds won't be fit-for-purpose; CCM will a series of office blocks and not a campus; disagreement that locating buildings near each other will create precinct.
9	Agreement that facilities do need to be improved and updated
10	Disagreement that new builds are more cost effective; concerns that process has already wasted significant time and resources; Sandy Bay buildings have been deliberately run-down over previous years; new builds aren't environmentally friendly.
11	Concern for locations of professional staff units; CCM will detrimentally impact the link between professional staff/professional units and Colleges/academic units.
12	CCM will overall reduce the student experience.
13	Positive comments on CCM.

Comments

The following are a selection of comments made in the survey:

- *The impact on traffic and parking may well be disastrous!*
- *As someone who lives beyond the reach of public transport, parking will remain a major issue for me.*
- *Is the city going to build any more multistore carparks? Where are they going to build them? I think it is wishful thinking to expect staff to stop driving and catch the bus or buy a bike.*
- *Commute is longer as the city has become more congested. A city-centric model may work in other cities, however the public transport infrastructure in Tasmania is insufficient to enable this model in Hobart.*
- *Who decided we no longer need above Churchill Ave? If we are a university then all such serious matters ought be discussed/voted on by/with academic staff. If we are a corporate body and no longer a university then please keep going as you are - but don't expect the community to be impressed long-term. This conversion ought have begun 2 years ago, and secret-squirrel decisions like this (above Churchill) are disingenuous and make one wonder seriously about the authenticity of this current process.*
- *I found the presentation to be biased in favour of moving to the city. When I looked at the source documents, they seemed to be working to a brief favouring the city option, and then to compound this, information presented in the studio theatre/online seems to have been "cherry picked" from those documents in favour of the city option.*
- *Working in the city is a great experience.*
- *The presented data was biased and seemed totally at odds with all the place-based rhetoric.*
- *Getting rid of the Sandy Bay Campus is basically finishes with the fell of a university where people from different faculties mix and meet. The city Centric will never give that feel, it will basically destroy the feel of a University.*
- *Further fragmentation of the campus...is to the determinant of the University. It loses its focus.*
- *[A city-centric model will] enhance a silo between colleges.*
- *I am so disappointed that we have no choice and yet university management continues to act as through we do.*

- *I get the feeling from the presentations I've heard that management is strongly biased towards the City option and perhaps is just going through the motions asking people's opinions. I think we would end up with the City option regardless of what people really want.*
- *Building has clearly been allowed to run down for years. The uni has wasted so much money in recent times which could have been used to repair the campus. I think closing sandy bay is the WORST decision I've experienced at UTAS in the last 15 years.*
- *Students keep telling us that if we move into the city then there is less reason to come to this university.*
- *Personally I love our green campus near the bush.*
- *An overly fragmented university will lose its sense of identity and prevent students from different disciplines interesting and leaning from one another.*
- *[when visiting Sandy Bay Campus] I often sat at Lazenby's and was amazed and impressed at the student interactions there. This is something our MSP students do not get.*
- *I am not completely against working in the city but I am worried about the lack of green spaces in city campuses.*
- *This campus [Sandy Bay] has history, is aesthetically pleasing. It is perfect and UTAS should not be moved into the city to create further traffic issues.*
- *It is better to keep and update the Sandy Bay Campus, there is excellent public transport, and it has an important sense of place.*
- *I do not appreciate being told that the management is completely open to a genuinely open discussion about the future of campus locations, when it is not. I feel insulted that the management can make us believe that.*
- *We have a beautiful campus at Sandy Bay, a city-based campus would be a complete loss.*
- *I would argue that having a central meeting place – eg a cafe or bar or dining space (Lazenbys the uni staff club or the ref/bar) is much more likely to create a sense of community. But that is still not collaboration.*
- *IF the bus services could be fixed, why is the public transport to Sandy Bay not better?*
- *There is also the environmental impact of selling off the vast amount of natural habitat on the sandy bay campus above cFriday, 22 March 2019hurchill ave.*
- *The obvious point is this – the buildings on SB were built in the 60s to 80s. They are at the end of the first life – to abandon them and just rebuild something else somewhere else is the height of environmental wastefulness.*
- *The research commissioned showed that students overwhelmingly want to stay on the Sandy Bay campus – they just want the buildings to be better and for the online services (MyLO help services etc) to be adequate. There is no enthusiasm for a city uni in the commissioned report. Why has this not been reported? I personally feel great despair about this decision and the way it is being made. I am not a fan of fake consultations*
- *I'm against the move into the CBD precinct. There are a range of reasons. One is the attractiveness and symbolism of a campus-centred institution. The campus [Sandy Bay] itself has rich symbolic resonances for these students, and this should not be underestimated.*
- *Students overwhelmingly have expressed their desire to retain the Sandy Bay campus. It is better for mutual enrichment for all faculties and centres to be co-located.*
- *Retain the Sandy Bay campus, refurbish or build new as needed, and gradually as opportunity arises bring those elements already dispersed back.*
- *We don't need to move into a jungle of concrete to do better work. Provide staff with nice workplace facilities at Sandy Bay taking advantage of the natural bush setting and nearby water views.*
- *How are the building going to be redesigned to facilitate a healthy working NON-OPEN plan environment?*
- *The idea of a move into the city is based on a 'thought bubble' of the last VC. I can think of no university that would choose to move in the city when it has a campus this good.*
- *While it is obvious that the University is being driven by financial gain for a City-Centred model (funds from sale of sandy bay properties + potential State/Commonwealth funds for city deal)- the distributed model is clearly integral to a place-based university (the feedback from cascading conversations). Disregarding this feedback by pushing for city centre model will highlight to all the 'fake' nature of University consultation processes. The city deal is not in the best interests of students, staff or Hobartians – it is very good for University bank balances and corporatised higher education.*