

## Minister Ogilvie on the need for a business case

From *Tasmania Mornings* with Leon Compton, ABC, 7 November 2024:

### “Leon Compton

Let's talk about what you'll do as Minister for this area. Have you told the university that you will support them selling the land above Churchill Avenue for housing? Have you told them directly that is done?

### Madeleine Ogilvie

**What I, no, what I have said is I want to see the full business case of what the proposal is. And my view is that business case ought to come through Parliament.** So that's our position. The bill will come on for debate. There are a range of views about this. And I noticed you touched on the funding issue as well. But again, let me say, I was really heartened to see the senators come out almost with one voice for Tasmania to say, this is the project we need and want to get that federal funding.”

(Transcript at: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/hobart-mornings/madeleine-ogilvie-on-utas-plan-to-stay-in-sandy-bay/104572170>; audio at: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/hobart-mornings/madeleine-ogilvie-on-utas-plan-to-stay-in-sandy-bay/104572170>; my bolding)

## UTAS on its “contingent” commitment to consolidating STEM below Churchill Avenue, and business case development

(Note: the 2016 STEM business case considered the two options of a new STEM in the CBD or below Churchill Avenue. I believe the characterisation of the 2016 STEM business case and other aspects of this email and following material is seriously misleading. See my blog post at: <https://theutaspapers.com/vc-blacks-cynical-500-million-stem-con-job/> )

Excerpt from UTAS’ evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on 2 October 2024:

“...**Mr WILLIE** - So, Tasmanians and decision-makers will be able to compare proposals with that sort of information for both? **One where you remain on Sandy Bay campus in a scaled-down footprint (below Churchill Avenue), and one for the city still?**

**Mr BURLING** - Yes, that's how we're refreshing it. We're refreshing the whole [2016 STEM] business case. That was done in the first version, but it was done on a city basis first. **We're actually refreshing the whole thing to say, yes, 'let's get those two scenarios' versus our 'what is the base case', which is running with the current facilities with no investment.** These business cases work on a very rigorous basis to say, okay, work out what your current base case is based on current investment, based on current student numbers and the trend over time. **Then it goes, okay, here's your scenario, let's say that's building a new STEM facility on Sandy Bay (below Churchill Avenue).** What does that cost and what's the benefit of it, versus the same things for a city location for that build. We are going through that exercise right now. That was in the original business case, and we're refreshing those numbers at the moment....”

([https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/85907/PAC-Wednesday-2-October-2024-FINAL.pdf](https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/85907/PAC-Wednesday-2-October-2024-FINAL.pdf), p17; my bolding)

Excerpt from the Minutes of the UTAS Council meeting of 17 October 2024:

**“8.1.3 \* Future of Southern Campus and Strategic Communications**

The Vice-Chancellor provided University Council with an update on the southern campus distributed model including the preferred site for a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) facility at Sandy Bay, and outlined the proposed plan for the other three campus sites including a ‘city campus’ to incorporate existing medical sciences, creative arts teaching, learning and research space and the Forestry Council Confidential Page 8 of 9 University of Tasmania Building which would include the Schools of Business and Economics and Education, Humanities and Social Sciences; a ‘historic campus’ on the Domain including the Phillip Smith Building as home to the International School, Outdoor Education Program and a ‘waterfront campus’ including the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies facilities at Salamanca and Taroon.

Discussion focused on the development of a STEM precinct at Sandy Bay which would include a complete retrofit of some existing science buildings, the addition of new builds, and the enhancement of the natural landscape of the campus and provide opportunities for industry co-location, and school and community engagement. Members considered the various zones on the Sandy Bay campus, including identified land to potentially hand back land to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and opportunities to utilise land north of Churchill Avenue, subject to negotiation with the State Government on the University of Tasmania (Protection of Land) Bill 2024. Council provided support for the positioning in relation to the future of the southern campus as outlined, **noting that the development of Sandy Bay was contingent on securing support and significant funding from the State and Federal Governments**. The details of the supporting communications and plans to engage key stakeholders were considered and supported.”

(UTAS Council Minutes at:

[https://www.utas.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/1759762/FINAL-Council-Minutes-17-October-2024.pdf](https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1759762/FINAL-Council-Minutes-17-October-2024.pdf), pages 7-8)

Email to staff of 5 November 2024 from Vice-Chancellor Black:

(Note: email contains bolding; the underlined bolding is mine)

**“Update on our Hobart Campus plans**

Dear colleagues,

Last month, I had the great pleasure of joining the State and Federal Education Ministers, Jo Palmer and Jason Clare, and the Mayor of Launceston, Matthew Garwood, to open The Shed. The final new build of our Inveresk Campus, The Shed is the state-of-the-art home for science and health in the North. The opening marked the culmination of a decade of collaboration, planning and investment in higher

education, delivered in partnership with all levels of government. Thanks to this partnership and the hard work of an enormous number of people, the North and North-West of Tasmania can now access some of the best university facilities in the country.

As the Northern Transformation project has been reaching its conclusion, the University has been continuing the work of mapping a future direction for our campuses in the South. Our Council has reflected over an extended period of time on important matters including the educational needs of Tasmania, staff and student requirements, community feedback, the major new policy and funding directions for higher education set by the Federal Government, the State Government's legislation and stated desire to see STEM remain at Sandy Bay, and the City of Hobart's planning directions. With those factors in mind, we have formed a plan for the South, which we are sharing today.

Our plan, **which is contingent on securing support and significant government funding**, is for a Hobart presence with four campus sites providing students with experiences built around the best the city has to offer. These sites would be:

- **A Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Campus** at Sandy Bay. This would see a complete retrofit of some existing buildings, the addition of new builds, and the enhancement of the natural landscape of the campus. It will also provide opportunities for industry co-location, and school and community engagement.
- **A City Campus** that incorporates our existing medical sciences and creative arts teaching, learning and research spaces, and provides a new home in the Forestry building for the Schools of Business and Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences.
- **A Historic Campus** on the Domain, the University's original home, which will host special offerings like our International School, Outdoor Education Program and aspects of our health offering.
- **A Waterfront Campus** comprising the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies facilities at Salamanca and Taroona.

As you know, many of these elements are in place. Others, like the Forestry building and IMAS Taroona are well underway and on track to be complete in 2026. We have made it clear that our priority now is STEM in Southern Tasmania. Contemporary STEM facilities are urgently needed for students and staff, for the future of STEM education in Tasmania and for our state's ability to meet workforce needs.

We have an existing business case for a new STEM precinct in the Hobart CBD, which was approved by Infrastructure Australia in 2017. Work has been underway to update this business case, informed by engagement with College of Sciences and Engineering (CoSE) staff, students and stakeholders, since the Tasmanian Government made its preference for STEM on Sandy Bay clear earlier this year. The City of Hobart Council also recently passed a motion to formally advocate for government funding to create a 'new world class STEM Hub' at Sandy Bay.

**The STEM facilities that Tasmania needs will cost in the order of \$500 million and support from the State and Federal Governments will be critical.** This is a pressing issue for our entire community. Unless we get started in the next 12 to 18 months, Tasmania won't have new STEM facilities until well into the 2030s, putting us decades behind other states. That matters when so

many new jobs and the competitiveness of our existing industries are dependent on science and technology.

The engagement we've had with our colleagues and students in CoSE and key stakeholders, as well as the work of the Campus Futures team and the architects and planners at Hassell, supports the development of a specialised STEM campus at Sandy Bay. It would provide opportunities to create a precinct that enables other education providers and industry to co-locate and collaborate to inspire future scientists and teach the skills and create the knowledge that will support a better future for Tasmania.

For the humanities and social sciences, a better future in contemporary, inspiring and vibrant facilities is just over a year away. Professor Nicholas Farrelly, as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Campus Life (Southern Tasmania), and Director of Campus Futures Poppy Fay have engaged with the Schools about their move into the Forestry Building alongside the Tasmanian School of Business and Economics. This will be a truly incredible teaching and research space in the heart of Hobart. Filled with state-of-the-art, flexible teaching facilities, the Forestry building is perfectly located for students and staff who are studying and researching the ways our society works economically, culturally and politically. The project is on track to be open for Semester 1, 2026.

The progress of this work has made it clear that two sites in the CBD – the former K&D and the corner property encompassing 33 to 37 Bathurst Street and 65 Argyle Street – are no longer required to support future teaching and research. We will put these properties on the market in the coming months. The proceeds from the sales will be invested in upgrading our teaching and research facilities, including the ongoing redevelopment of IMAS Taroona and the soon to commence new research facility for the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture at Newnham.

**We will be seeking to secure government funding for the development of new STEM facilities below Churchill Avenue. To contribute to the development, we will also be engaging with the Tasmanian Government about the future of the University's land above Churchill Avenue, and seeking support from the Tasmanian Parliament to ensure it is unencumbered so it can be developed to provide a funding contribution to new STEM facilities.**

A Hobart presence across four sites – a STEM Campus, City Campus, Historic Campus, and Waterfront Campus – is a path to ensuring Tasmanians have access to the education and research facilities we all need for our future. We cannot travel this path alone. To get the best outcome for Tasmania, we will need funding and strong support from all levels of Government just as we had in Launceston and Burnie.

Nicholas and Poppy will be hosting all staff drop-in sessions so you can hear more about the future direction of our southern campuses and ask questions. Please look out for invitations in your inbox tomorrow. There's also an intranet page with more information and you can always contact the Campus Futures team with any queries via [Campus.Transformation@utas.edu.au](mailto:Campus.Transformation@utas.edu.au).

Regards,

Rufus"

Email to staff on 5 November 2024 from Dr Angela Castles, Acting Executive Dean, College of Sciences and Engineering:

**“Proposed new STEM facility at Sandy Bay**

Dear colleagues,

Today we reach an important milestone for the College of Sciences and Engineering, with the decision being announced to build our new STEM facility at Sandy Bay, **contingent on government funding**. There has been a long path of consultation and collaboration to get to this point, and I would like to thank all who have participated. This year we have built the foundations on which we will transform STEM education in Tasmania, enabling us to meet future challenges, and helping us to create the truly contemporary STEM workforce that Tasmania needs.

Our Future of Science and Engineering work, the STEM survey and workshops, and the Appreciative Inquiry Summit held in August have all been instrumental in guiding our thinking towards this decision. Certain themes came through consistently in all these engagement activities. These included the importance for our students to learn by doing in accessible spaces equipped with innovative, cutting-edge technologies. Facilitating collaboration, world class research spaces, deeper industry engagement, incorporating indigenous knowledges and integrating nature into learning and working on a green campus were identified as priorities.

**It is important to acknowledge that the plan for a future at Sandy Bay is contingent on a commitment of at least \$500 million in government funding to build and retrofit facilities appropriate for our future research and teaching programs**, and it is critical that all stakeholders work together to achieve this. While our facilities have served us well, we can't achieve what Tasmania needs us to achieve with facilities built for 20th century science and technology. In addition, our new STEM facilities must support us to deliver the vision outlined in our University's strategy refresh, and the future that the Australian Universities Accord proposes.

There is still much planning to be done and I encourage you to be part of that as opportunities arise. For initial questions, all staff will receive an invitation to a choice of Zoom drop-in sessions and an intranet page has been established. You can also contact the Campus Futures team via [Campus.Transformation@utas.edu.au](mailto:Campus.Transformation@utas.edu.au). Thank you for coming on this journey so far and I look forward to working with you all to shape the next steps.

Kind regards,

Angela” (my bolding)

Excerpt from ABC news article of 5 November 2025:

“.....Professor Black said the university's plans for the future revolved around campus sites in the state's south "providing students with experiences built around the best the city has to offer".

He said the plan was "**contingent on securing support and significant government funding**".

The four sites would be:

- A new STEM campus at Sandy Bay, requiring a complete retrofit of some existing buildings and adding some new ones.
- A city campus built around the existing medical sciences and creative arts building, plus the old Forestry building, which would be home to the schools of Business and Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences.
- A historic campus on Hobart's Queens Domain, featuring the university's international school, outdoor education program and parts of its health degrees.
- A waterfront campus, centred around the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies facilities at Taroona and on Hobart's waterfront.

"As you know, many of these elements are in place.

"Others, like the Forestry building and IMAS Taroona are well underway and on track to be complete in 2026," Professor Black said in the email to staff.."

(<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-05/utas-to-keep-some-faculties-at-sandy-bay/104562652>; my bolding)

From the UTAS Newsroom on 6 November 2024:

“Following the completion of the new Launceston campus at Inveresk, the University of Tasmania has today outlined the future direction for its campus in Hobart.

The plan, **which is contingent on securing significant government funding**, is for a Hobart campus with four key sites each providing students with experiences built around the best the city has to offer.

These sites would be a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Campus at Sandy Bay; a City Campus encompassing existing facilities and a fully occupied Forestry Building; a Historic Campus on the Domain, the University’s original home; and a Waterfront Campus comprising the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at Salamanca and Taroona.

To achieve this plan, the next major steps for the University are to:

- Work with the Tasmanian and Australian Governments to develop a plan to fund new STEM facilities at Sandy Bay, which would involve complete retrofits of some existing buildings, the construction of some new buildings, and the enhancement of the natural landscape of the campus
- Locate, from Semester 1, 2026, the Schools of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Tasmanian School of Business and Economics in the Forestry Building

- Sell the former K&D site and the corner property encompassing 33 to 37 Bathurst Street and 65 Argyle Street, which are now surplus to requirements
- Engage with the Tasmanian Government about the future of the land above Churchill Avenue and seek support from the Parliament to ensure it is unencumbered so it can be developed to provide a funding contribution to new STEM facilities....”  
(<https://www.utas.edu.au/about/news-and-stories/articles/2024/university-of-tasmanias-future-direction-for-its-hobart-campus>; my bolding)

From the University Update in the *Alumni Magazine*, posted online on 17 December 2024::

“...With those factors in mind, we have formed a plan for the South, **which is contingent on securing support and significant government funding**, that would see four key sites, each providing students with experiences built around the best the city has to offer....”  
(<https://www.utas.edu.au/community-and-partners/alumni/news-and-publications/magazine>; my bolding)

See similar material at:

<https://www.utas.edu.au/about/campuses/tours>

<https://www.utas.edu.au/about/campuses/southern-transformation>