

To: The General Manager,  
Michael Stretton,  
Launceston City Council  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020

I wish to register my strong opposition to the Notice of Intention to Lease Public Land to the University of Tasmania, that land being currently under the control of The Royal National Pastoral and Agricultural Society of Tasmania.

My understanding is that the reason for this proposed lease of land to UTAS is for their future parking “needs” associated with their continually flexible plans to relocate the Newnham Campus to the Tidal Flood Zone of Inveresk and I believe that there are serious reasons why this transference of land lease should not proceed.

Firstly, and this would appear to be a basic gap in the proposal, is that to my knowledge, the lease arrangements for the land in question has not in fact been formalised.

Secondly, encouraging any further traffic into the Inveresk area will only compound the already existing and growing, traffic congestion problems. This is despite Council’ s “Traffic Management Plan” which will not and cannot resolve an issue that will only worsen over future years.

Thirdly, given the track record to date of UTAS with their ever-changing “plans” on the run, there is no reason to believe that anything will actually occur on site apart from yet another successful land grab by UTAS and which will prevent any other potential developments on the land for up to forty years. It is my belief that Council was sold a donkey by the previous GM and UTAS from the very beginning of this unnecessary and wasteful relocation proposal and they are still trying to pin a tail on it to make it look vaguely real.

Fourth, the whole relocation proposal is now so far from the original “concept” that was sold and bought by both Council and Infrastructure Australia that it bears virtually no resemblance to it and I would argue that it should be cancelled totally or made to start correctly from the beginning. The public were also “sold” wonderful, Disneyland type images of buildings and an exciting and vibrant precinct and Launceston central. They have a right to better and more accurate information and outcomes and deserve to know the truth of this most unprofessional relocation proposal.

The very fact that UTAS is still bandying around the figure of 10000 + new students, particularly given the recent COVID 19 issues and the financial crisis the whole country is facing, in my opinion smacks of obfuscation to the highest level. They cannot play out the numbers however it suits them at any given time in order to grab a sweet review from The Examiner or un-challenged support from Council.

The “plan” to date has been little better than marketing guff whilst in the real world, student numbers have dropped and there is no real fix in site for that. Competition in the university sector is tough and so-called “Associate Degrees” will be about as effective and popular as the Council’s Traffic Management Plan. UTAS on one hand talk of more online courses and we hear of staff losses and then an arbitrary figure of more staff to be employed is flitted out to tantalise and appease. And still nothing substantial appears.

See below article from Crikey.com...

### ***Will our Unis go broke?***

*La Trobe University could be the first victim of the pandemic’s brutalisation of the higher education sector, with the institution reportedly weeks away from going broke.*

*La Trobe isn’t the only university that has been hit particularly hard by the sudden loss of international student revenue. Deakin University is cutting 400 staff roles. The University of the Sunshine Coast also began offering staff voluntary redundancies to plug a \$44 million black hole this week.*

*But at this stage, it’s hard to say how things will pan out. “There’s no precedent for a public university going broke,” Australian National University higher education professor Andrew Norton tells Crikey. The bulk of La Trobe’s public funding comes from the government. But there is no obligation on the state or federal government to bail it out.*

*Although, allowing a university to go under would certainly be “a bad political look that no education minister would want to have on their political record”.*

I urge you to refuse the transfer of the Land Lease from The Show Society to UTAS on all the above grounds and in particular because it could and should be used for some better and viable development that would actually benefit a wider cross-section of the community. I believe this land grab will only benefit the UTAS coffers with no guarantees of any short or long-term positives for Launceston.

Yours Sincerely



Mowbray