

Some people have contacted Greens' sitting Councillors and candidates and asked:

What is your position on the UTAS move from Sandy Bay?

I have spent considerable time over the years considering how Hobart symbiotically grows, maintains its character, and provides new opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

For years UTAS has been moving facilities and research centres into the city – with scarcely a murmur of discontent from the public. Only relatively recently, since the wholesale move from Sandy Bay campus was announced, has public interest mounted.

The following is a list of points that provides a more fulsome answer than simply “yes” or “no”, as the discussion, like all worthwhile debates, is composed of niche complexities, which must be outlined to best understand angles of solutions and opposition.

1. The city move

I take a pragmatic view of the university's proposed move into the city – whether it occurs over 5, 10, 20 years or longer. The Hobart City Council has a broad vision of better land use and a more vibrant inner city – the [Central Hobart Precincts Structure Plan](#) sees the better use of 64 inner city blocks. This includes the transformation of inner-city car yards into urban hubs, housing 3000-5000 extra people, and providing many jobs to support this increased population.

UTAS continuing its move to the inner city could be a key contributor to the broader vision: greater vibrancy with students including younger people who live, study and work in the city centre, academics and staff, and providing the growing population with an easily accessible university and other higher education facilities that might be within walking distance.

Like many, I have travelled to numerous cities where university and higher education occurs in city centres. I have attended conferences and compared Hobart to other cities of similar scale, and have taken a keen interest in urban design principles that could have benefits to a city Hobart's size.

Having more people relying on dynamic spaces can enliven a city. Jan Gehl and his associates, including fellow Danish architect Lars Gemzoe, when visiting Hobart, introduced me to the advantages a city gains when principles of easy access, the design of good urban spaces, the use of spaces and buildings for multiple purposes at all times of the day and night. Think how Salamanca Place is transformed into our amazing Salamanca Market every Saturday or how Bathurst St gives way to the Farmers' Market on Sundays. Many of the projects of the [Inner City Action Plan](#) have been delivered, realising some of the ways our city has changed to better use our public space.

Any major development should contribute to the commonwealth of its environs. I see the opportunity for UTAS to lead in providing developer contributions to the public realm. The connections between Brisbane and Melville Streets, and from Elizabeth through to Melville Streets, are examples where mid-block links improve pedestrian ease of access. It provides a choice as to how people traverse the city, and generally makes the city more interesting.

As someone concerned about improving the way people experience their time in Hobart's CBD and Midtown, I would like to see more developers contribute toward community space upgrades that have real public benefit.

2. The Sandy Bay change

For some, the more contentious aspect of the equation is the departure from Sandy Bay: Will this change the face of Sandy Bay? Indeed, there would be change, as suburbs must evolve over the course of time.

Do I see the benefits of more housing in Sandy Bay – in the midst of a housing crisis, yes! I do. Can a mix of new housing be designed well to provide the highest possible standard while coexisting with the present community? That is the question we are still seeking greater detail on.

If the Sandy Bay campus is no longer used as an academic institution, it should be a model of sustainability, running on renewables. It should also be connected to the city by a Battery Point walkway. This is another piece of public realm the university should contribute to, for public and health benefits and for reducing congestion as a desirable way of walking or riding between the city and Sandy Bay.

3. What about the traffic?

Traffic and the number of cars on Tasmanian roads is ever-increasing. The state government is slowly recognising that a stronger public transport system is vital. Having more people living in close proximity to the city and to work and services is part of the solution.

Is it a pipe dream to think more people would be using public transport over the course of the next 5 years? Is it not something that we as a community should be demanding? Transport accounts for 21% of Tasmania's greenhouse gas emissions, and cars account for 92% of that figure. I'll continue to support better public transport – both buses and ferries – for Greater Hobart. The walkway would also allow for healthier choices. This modal shift to walking and other activities that do not include using a car is better for health. Reducing emissions and the number of cars causing congestion is better for our city.

4. Other issues at play

I have not been a fan of all UTAS developments in the past, which is on the public record, but these are considered as individual applications when I am acting as a member of a Planning Authority, as mandated by the Local Government Act.

Presently, there are many elements at play with the public perception of UTAS: the university is seen as developer not educator, standards of education, staffing issues.

Clearly, there is a palpable dissatisfaction amongst academics and staff. I also acknowledge the sense of loss that many people might have of the proposal - academics, alumni, residents of Hobart and from further afield.

The way that universities are delivering education has changed. The digital and pandemic disruptors may have changed the teaching and learning landscape forever.

These are complex issues. I do understand and acknowledge these concerns, and many of the fears some people hold as to UTAS being able to be honest and to deliver what they say they will.

5. Final thoughts

Ultimately, the decision to move other UTAS faculties from Sandy Bay into the city is not a decision of Hobart Council. However, the benefits as mentioned are considerable to a city with many challenges in an era equally as challenging. Cities are always changing, and I believe that there are benefits beyond the student population for more university activities centrally located. There is greater diversity in the city, more people available to work in and utilise service industries.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and considering the reasons why I hold this position.

Please contact me if you'd like to discuss further.

Helen Burnet for Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillor.

VOTE 1-5 GREEN

For further information: [Our Local Government Candidates | Tasmanian Greens](#)

Contact us Ph: 6234 2721 E: helenburnet@gmail.com

Authorised by Deb Rees, 298 Argyle St North Hobart TAS 7000