

# Dean Harriss MLC

Independent Member for Huon



30 November 2025

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Premier  
Parliament of Tasmania

The Hon Eric Abetz MP  
Treasurer  
Parliament of Tasmania

Dear Sirs

I am writing to advise you of my current position on the Macquarie Point approval order, which is to be debated next week.

As you know, I have kept an open mind while I have been working as hard as I can to understand both the opportunities of the stadium build and the issues that it raises. I appreciate your willingness to meet through that process, and the briefings you have arranged, including with your departments.

I am a foundation member of the Devils and, like the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians, I am a strong supporter of the case for our own team in our national game.

However, the stadium is a more complicated question. The process which has led us to this point has been, in my view, unnecessarily divisive and far too narrowly focussed.

The abrupt displacement of the widely-supported MONA vision for an Aboriginal Truth and Reconciliation Park without consultation or consent was reminiscent of the brutal colonial land grab, the deadly consequences of which it was intended to commemorate.

The dismissal of the concerns of veterans' organisations over the impact of the stadium on the Cenotaph disrespects the sacrifice of those who were killed fighting for our country and the freedoms we enjoy.

The exclusive focus on Macquarie Point in preference to the Mac 2.0 proposal or other potential sites which could have avoided both those consequences is regrettable.

Nevertheless, I accept that the proposal subject to the order currently before the Parliament is the only one we have, and I accept that a vote against the order is likely to result in the withdrawal of the Devils' licence and the end of the AFL dream.

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What I do not accept is that on current budget settings, we can afford the Macquarie Point stadium development. We know we don't have the cash to pay for it because we're already borrowing more than \$1 billion a year to pay for essential services like health and education. The Government has ruled out tax increases, so that leaves cuts in public services or even more borrowings on top of the headlong plunge into debt we're already seeing. Any new borrowings will be at a higher rate and thus a greater burden on our budget due to the recent credit rating downgrades by both Credit Rating Agencies.

The Eslake Report last August and the Treasury Pre-Election Report in June both pointed to a sharp deterioration in Tasmania's financial position and warned that explicit policy choices and immediate and sustained budget repair was needed.

Despite a series of recommendations in both reports, that financial repair was neither acknowledged nor seriously tackled in the November Budget. Instead, the deficit and debt is rising further, and as a result of the credit ratings downgrade, the cost of borrowings is skyrocketing.

To approve the stadium in the face of that demonstrated government inaction on the budget would not be responsible. As you observed in 2017, Treasurer: "It is absolutely reprehensible when this generation of leadership seeks to maintain its standard of living at the expense of the next generation, which will have to repay that debt with interest".

However, saying no to the stadium would leave the legitimate aspirations of Tasmanians who support the Devils at the mercy of the AFL, which says without the stadium the licence will be withdrawn. That is not what any of us want, so I am proposing a series of expectations for consideration as I finalise my voting intention of the Order.

I am prepared to consider voting for the stadium, but only on the basis that I can be convinced that the Government, and by this I mean all current Ministers and party backbenchers are fair dinkum about ending its out-of-control spending and getting the budget back on track.

That will require signed commitments to specific actions, including the dumping of long-held but in the circumstances utterly irresponsible promises such as no tax increases. Billion dollar spending commitments have to be paid for. The days of using the public purse as a Liberal Party piggy bank must end. If it doesn't stop we'll go broke. If we need to call on the Australian government for support, it will clearly not be on our terms.

Given the unprecedented use of the public finances to pay for party political election promises and the resultant increase in state debt (at least \$5 billion in 7 years on my calculations), I also require commitments that will put an end to the rorts, introduce guidelines for the proper allocation of taxpayers' dollars - particularly during election campaigns - and provide the Integrity Commission and Audit Tasmania with the

finances and flexibility to enable them to discharge their critical integrity responsibilities.

## COMMITMENTS

I need these commitments signed by every member of the Parliamentary Liberal Party because every member has been a party to the wild west electioneering spend that has helped dig the financial hole that we're in.

The Government:

- Accepts the findings of the Eslake Report and the Pre-Election Financial Outlook Report that the Budget is unsustainable and requires immediate and sustained repair.
- Agrees to implement the Eslake Report recommendations in full, starting with the 2026-27 Budget. That includes:
  - Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of services to ensure users and taxpayers are getting value for money rather than throwing money at failed systems;
  - Raising additional own-source revenues, by identifying prior to the 2026/27 budget areas in which additional revenues will be raised and the expected amounts noting own-source revenues have fallen to less than 30% of total revenues and far below the Government's own fiscal target;
  - A new approach to infrastructure spending, with government as well as government owned business projects selected on merit based on robust cost-benefit analysis;
  - A return to an 'underlying' net operating surplus within four years and a clear and full detail of how this will be achieved through increased revenues and reduced spending;
  - Reducing the ratios of net debt and net financial liabilities to gross state product to below the corresponding averages for all states and territories within five years; and
  - Reducing the ratio of interest payments plus defined superannuation benefit payments to less than 7% of revenues within five years.
- Agrees that to provide independent oversight of progress on budget repair, Saul Eslake will be commissioned to report to Parliament against progress in each Budget from 2026-27 within 3 months of the annual budget being delivered.
  - Acknowledges the Integrity Commission's 2022 findings that there are currently no mandatory regulations, legislation or policies about how Tasmanian Ministers manage grants – including those they pledge during an election campaign and introduces legislation by April 2026 to:
    - replicate in Tasmania the management features of Commonwealth grant programs, where the rules apply to Ministers and other public officers – not just the public service;

- create specific rules around making and authorisation of election commitments;
  - ensure the rules apply to ad hoc or discretionary grant commitments;
  - the requirement that Ministers must take advice from the public service before approving most grants;
  - if the Minister's decision diverges from public service advice, they must record the reason for that in writing;
  - includes specific rules for Ministers approving a grant for their own electorate; and
  - Ministers must provide a statement that they have not approved grant expenditure unless they are satisfied that it is an 'efficient, effective, economical and ethical' use of taxpayer funds'.
- Further agrees that the Budget of the Integrity Commission will be increased to an average of the per capita funding of all state and territory integrity and anti-corruption commissions, starting from July 1 2026.
  - Agrees that outstanding recommendations of the 2016 Cox Report on the Integrity Commission will be implemented by June 30 2026.
  - Agrees to restore the funding of Audit Tasmania to a level required to enable Audit Tasmania to undertake at least six (6) performance audits per annum.

Yours sincerely

**DEAN HARRISS MLC**

