UTAS MOVE TO HOBART CBD

At theUTAS Alumni AGM last December the Vice Chancellor,Rufus Black,gave a detailed reasons for relocation by the University to the CBD.He cited the need for community engagement and the advantages a centralised institution provided for students travelling from outside Hobart.He also referred to the challenges the University faced with lower intakes from Tasmanian based students with the decline in number of the 18 plus age group, together with the challenges of online learning.I attempted to move a motion to discuss this proposal but it was ignored and the subsequent minutes of the AGM made no mention of the motion.

The Vice-Chancellor has stressed that the buildings on the Sandy Bay campus were in general due for replacement.He had earlier noted (Mercury 5 April) that two thirds of those were needing replacement and only one out of the 67 buildings were less than 10 years old.In this report presented to the University Council stated that a move to the CBD would cost $445m and save the University $125m as against $570m in retaining the existing campus.This report has never been made public and as Monica Antel points out no accounting and financial data has been given for the estimates of renovating the existing buildings

At the back of Churchill avenue are over 100 hectares of land.so the cost of renovation might be met by its sale or leasing .Hill Street Grocer already occupy the old Uniprint site.

The Vice Chacellor has also claimed that the move to the CBD would allow an extra 9% of students living across New Norfolk,Brighton/Bridgewater,Midway Point access to a CBD based UniversityThis assumption is based on the expectation that transport planning will respond for Hobart to solve our current problems.An increase in 10,000 international students by 2022 would provide traffic congestion problems to challenge the University’s sustainable transport section.Bob Cotgrove noted (Mercury April 7) daily traffic patterns of staff and students from Dynnyrne,Mount Nelson,Sandy Bay and Taroona would significantly increase traffic flows along Regent Street and Sandy Bay and Taroona which are already congested by heavy traffic on Macquarie and Davey Streets,

Moving the existing University departments to areas of the CBD ,apart from the cost and impact involved,breaks up the interaction between staff and students.The social focus of Lazenbv’s and the Staff Club ,the open spaces would be lost.The Consevatorium,the Media Centre and the Marine and Antarctic Studies are all central.However,relative to University campuses elsewhere in Australia, all these establishments are close to the Sandy Bay campus.

The University had started the discussion.All aspects of the move by UTAS to the CBD needs to have plenty of vigorous public debate.

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(Talking Point Mercury 10/2/20)

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This opinion does necessarily reflect the views of the CILT.