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**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2026.**

## **SALE OF WILKINSONS POINT**

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**Premier Jeremy Rockliff**

**The Committee met at 1:02 pm.**

**DEPUTY CHAIR** (Ms Thomas) - Welcome, Premier, Secretary of DPAC and Acting Secretary of Department of State Growth to today's hearing of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts' targeted inquiry into the proposed sale of Crown land at Wilkinsons Point.

I'm Bec Thomas, Acting Chair of the Public Accounts Committee today and joining me are my fellow Committee members: Dean Winter, Luke Edmunds, Marcus Vermey and, online, Roger Jaensch. We have apologies today from Ruth Forrest.

As you would be aware, all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. This hearing is public, which means members of the public and media may be present. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the Committee website when it becomes available. The hearing is also being broadcast. Should you wish for some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you can make that request to the Committee, and the Committee will consider your request.

Premier, if you'd like to now introduce those individuals with you at the table.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thanks, Chair. Great to be with you this afternoon and thank you Committee members. With you there, is Shane Gregory, the Acting Secretary of State Growth. Welcome, Shane. With me, is Kath Morgan-Wicks, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Gregory, I'll ask you here at the table to take the statutory declaration just in front of you there.

**Mr SHANE GREGORY**, ACTING SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**Ms KATHRINE MORGAN-WICKS**, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED Via TEAMS.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Premier, would you like to make an opening Statement?

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, thanks very much, Acting Chair. Again, great to be with you and I thank members of the Committee for the opportunity to be with you today.

At the outset, I want to, again, reiterate and reState why Wilkinsons Point matters. It is a strategically significant riverfront site with the potential to deliver significant long-term economic and community benefits. That is why successive Tasmanian Governments have engaged with the project. I want to take this opportunity to place on the public record a clear account of the project's origins, its evolution and the basis on which decisions have been taken by successive Governments. I want to make three matters clear. First, the pathway for the redevelopment of Wilkinsons Point originated with the Glenorchy City Council, not the State Government. Second, the State's involvement occurred at Council's request and within negotiating parameters that were already well advanced between the Council and the private proponent. And third, while negotiations have been underway for an extended period, no final binding land sale has occurred, and any such transaction would only proceed if it were in the public interest.

By way of background, Chair: in July 2018, Glenorchy City Council resolved its intention to dispose of the Derwent Entertainment Centre site: Council went to the open market with the site, including the Derwent Entertainment Centre; in June 2019 Council resolved to enter into exclusive negotiations with the LK Group. That decision reflected a deliberate policy choice by an elected local Government authority to pursue a negotiated outcome rather than reverting to an open tender process. From that point forward, Council did not commence a competitive market process. The available Council records and evidence previously presented to the Public Works Committee confirm that this was an intentional approach aimed at activating a strategically significant site that, despite its location, had failed for decades to attract meaningful or sustained development interest.

The State became involved only after these decisions had been taken. In mid-2019, the Department of State Growth was asked to lead negotiations on behalf of the State following Council's approach and in the context of a broader proposal then being negotiated between Council and the LK Group. That proposal encompassed the redevelopment of the DEC, the establishment of a Tasmanian NBL team and the development of the Wilkinsons Point precinct. Across this period, decisions were considered and reaffirmed by successive premiers, including Mr Hodgman, Mr Gutwein, and this continuity is important. At each stage, the Government has proceeded on the basis of the same underlying facts I previously outlined and while the Premier of the day changed, it is important we remain aware of those prior commitments.

In December 2019, the State made clear that public ownership of the DEC would be required for public funds to be invested in its upgrade. In February 2020, the Government agreed to progress the purchase of the DEC and Wilkinsons Point from Council. In November 2020, the DEC and Wilkinsons Point were acquired by the Crown for approximately \$8 million. That acquisition enabled the DEC upgrade to proceed and position the State to facilitate future development of Wilkinsons Point.

Progress on Wilkinsons Point was then impacted by a range of factors including the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in infrastructure priorities such as ferry terminal planning and relocation of community facilities. While other elements progressed, Wilkinsons Point did not advance at the same pace. I am disappointed about the lack of progress at this stage. I recognise there are complexities in executing development agreements such as this, however, the Government has not moved at a sufficient pace throughout this period.

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In October 2024, the Government again agreed to progress the sale arrangements. In February 2025, new non-binding terms were agreed. As previously confirmed to this Committee, no final binding land sale has been executed.

I note the Auditor-General has provided a report on this project, and I thank the Auditor-General for this and I want to make it clear that the Department agreed to implement the report's recommendations.

Before turning to questions, I want to reiterate why the Government is pursuing this project: it's an economic boom for the northern suburbs in southern Tasmania; it will be activated with the development of surplus Crown land at Wilkinsons Point; LK Group has committed to invest some \$500 million to transform the site - a multi-use retail precinct, a family resort and a hotel complex; the development will transform the waterfront precinct and provide an economic boom for the State; this would be a very big win for our tradies and local suppliers and thousands of jobs and years of work set to be activated across three exciting stages of development on the site; we are activating the northern suburbs corridor; and the expansion of our ferry network will further benefit connectivity in the area.

With other exciting projects in the area, I'm confident this can be the awakening of Hobart's northern suburbs and I expect, of course, the Committee will explore why an open tender process was not initiated by the State, how value for money is being protected, and why negotiations have taken time. The answer to these questions is grounded in the fact that the negotiated pathway was established by Council and subsequently relied upon by successive Premiers and, indeed, I'm very passionate about economic development.

Finally, it's important to place Wilkinsons Point in its historical context. Over nearly 24 years as a Member of Parliament, I have seen this site remain effectively dormant through multiple Governments, Councils and economic cycles. No substantive proposal has previously progressed to delivery. The proposal under consideration represents the first generally comprehensive attempt to activate the site and transform it into an economically productive precinct. That context matters, Acting Chair, and explains why successive Premiers have sought to progress a long-term negotiated solution rather than accept continued inertia. Thank you for your time today and I welcome the opportunity for questions.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Thank you, Premier, I appreciate the context that you've provided there. I might just kick off with a question in relation to the statement you've made and reiterated about the negotiated pathway being established by the Council. I guess, when the Government purchased the Derwent Entertainment Centre and the Wilkinsons Point land from the Council, was it part of the sale agreement that the Government was to continue an exclusive negotiating period with the LK Group? What was the time limit on that agreement?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - So, if I go to the agreement itself - and you're talking about the matters pertaining to the agreement as announced a little while ago, in terms of the first heads of agreement?

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Sorry, no, I'm talking about the agreement between the State and the Glenorchy City Council - that was the sale agreement for the State to purchase the land at Wilkinsons Point and the Derwent Entertainment Centre from the Council.

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - You're saying this negotiated pathway with LK Group was established by the Council, and it was done so following a process whereby Council made that resolution based on advice and, my understanding is, with the involvement of a probity adviser. That was a process established by the Council. What I'm seeking to understand is when the Government purchased the land and the Derwent Entertainment Centre from the Council, as part of that sale agreement was there a binding commitment to continuing that exclusive negotiation that Council had committed to with the LK Group - but the Government commitment to do that - like, Government doesn't just assume a position of a Council that - typically, if a Government purchases land and an asset from a Council, I would expect it's up to them what they then do with it - it would be unusual for Government to just say, 'Alright, we'll take up what Council's been doing'.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Except to say the spirit of the agreement and the opportunity that presented itself, we thought best to continue when it comes to - from my recollection, and this was some time ago - for the opportunity that it provided. And, of course, as I've stated before, opportunity of an NBL team and those matters as well. I'd have to find that sale agreement from some time ago, unless Mr Gregory has it - it was well before my time as Premier, indeed. You know, the LK Group proposal for a multi-use precinct at Wilkinsons Point does provide an opportunity to unlock Crown land that has not been utilised for decades and decades. My view is that we needed to be consistent with the Council, original agreements, previous Premiers as well, and an open tender was not initiated by the State because the development pathway had already been lawfully established by the Glenorchy City Council prior to State involvement, is my understanding.

In June 2019, Council resolved to pursue exclusive negotiations with the LK Group, rather than an open market process. When the State subsequently became involved at Council's request, it did so within the established negotiating parameters, as I've said previously. We didn't create an exclusive pathway or, indeed, impose one. There's nothing legally binding to this pathway. As I explained in my opening statement, it is a good-faith action and an opportunity that, I believe, is worthy of progression.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Sure. So, just to be clear, though, the exclusive negotiation period that was established between Glenorchy City Council and LK Group, that you refer to, would have lapsed at the time the agreement was made by the State to purchase the land and the asset from the Glenorchy City Council? That agreement would have lapsed, and then it was up to the State Government as to what it did with the land and the asset going forward. So, my question then is: did the State Government at that point enter into an exclusive negotiating period with the LK Group?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - To the best of my knowledge, Acting Chair, is that we picked up the intent and purpose of the Glenorchy City Council agreement as a starting point to work towards the redevelopment from that point. I'd have to take advice on the definition of lapse and the like, and it was some time ago now - going back almost seven or eight years. So, I can find further information, and I intend to write to Committee as well in terms of the evidence I present today and any further questions that need further clarification, Acting Chair.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Great, thank you. Perhaps to clarify on that one we might request a copy of the sale agreement between the Glenorchy City Council and the State Government.

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Sure.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay, thank you. Can you outline your understanding of the current status of the negotiations with LK Group as of today?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, I can. There's been a pause - if that's the right word - on negotiations at this point. I want to restart the negotiations as soon as possible. We obviously had the heads of agreement, that was announced previously, to require further negotiating points - or establish a base for negotiations. I would like to resume those negotiations as soon as practicably possible. I still believe, as I outlined in my State of the State address, my passion for the project; it's too good of an opportunity not to investigate further.

At the end of the day, we may well not come to an agreement. If that's the case, then we look for other options. But we will not proceed without the fact that this is very good value for the Tasmanian taxpayer. I believe the opportunity exists for it to be very good value for the Tasmanian taxpayer, which is why I'm keen to restart negotiations as soon as possible.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Do you have an expected timeframe for when those negotiations will restart?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'd like to start them again next week, Acting Chair, if that was possible. I mean, negotiations take some time. Clearly this has taken longer than I would have liked and expected, and sometimes negotiations can be protracted for reasons of timeframes around when one party puts forward negotiating points and the timeframe to get back to that negotiating point. A good example of that, of course, is the wage negotiations that we've announced today, successfully, which is good for a number of agreements, and that's taken obviously some time. Good faith negotiations are important and that's what I intend to pursue and continue to pursue. I won't be intimately involved in the negotiations, obviously. That is for the Acting Secretary of State Growth's involvement and Mr Gregory's team. I want to, for the Government, restart those negotiations as soon as possible.

**DEPTUY CHAIR** - So, you said you'd like to next week if possible. Is that possible and is that your intention?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Anything's possible, Acting Chair. It would be my intention to start the process of organising further engagement with the LK Group to see what we can negotiate - finalise an agreement, of course, which will be very transparent and open to the Tasmanian public, as it should be. We'll have, obviously, key milestones attached to it, as the heads of agreements already indicated it would, and see an opportunity that can be realised in the best interest of the Tasmanian people.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - So, if negotiations do start next week, when do you expect the Government to make a final decision on whether to finalise a deal with LK Group? Is there a timeline in sight? At what point do you end the current negotiations?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Look, I'd have to say just as soon as practicable. I would like this worked through as soon as possible, Acting Chair, given the opportunity that presents itself. I cannot give a specific timeframe on when that would likely be completed because negotiations can take some time to reach a final agreement. But with goodwill in the room, I'm

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sure we can come to an arrangement as soon as possible. Again, if not, then we would seek other options -

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Right. So, at this time -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and potential.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Yes. So, you have no concrete plan or timelines in place, as to how long is too long for these negotiations to go. It's taken six years to date, and we still don't have a finalised agreement. In your mind, is there an end date?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That's probably going back almost eight years, really, Chair, and I can clarify that timeline for you - when it involves the Glenorchy City Council and the like. So, yes, it's taken some time. It's important to take the time further, however, in my view, to ensure that the Tasmanian taxpayer gets good value for money in terms of our investment and, indeed, the land itself, to realise what is a very, very big opportunity.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - So, do you consider that if an open tender process had been undertaken, if after the Government purchased the land from the Glenorchy City Council, recognising that Glenorchy City Council had, as its own entity, its own agreement following due process, established an agreement to deal exclusively with the proponent - if the Government had have taken a different approach and undertaken an open tender process, do you accept that with clear expectations about infrastructure contributions, criteria on development milestones and alignment with Government objectives, that perhaps it could have been finalised by now if those things were set out from the start?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I don't necessarily accept that, no. Again, we've tried as best as possible and there's been some competing time interests since that time obviously through a range of matters and I've mentioned the pandemic. I believe it was good for us to step in at the time for what the benefits we've seen as well, in terms of the establishment of the JackJumpers and the like. It's a hypothetical question. I don't necessarily support the premise of the question, because I don't have a crystal ball. But in terms of the opportunity that presents us, it is a very, very big opportunity - jobs, economic development. As I've pointed to before, it so happens that it coincides with a very big opportunity when it comes to Dowsing Point, which I've spoken to three federal ministers and the Prime Minister about in the last two weeks - about shared infrastructure for that development, potentially. It makes good sense, given, if I can call it the 'precinct', to be developed utilising the investments we're making in terms of headworks, investment and the like.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay. Finally, before I move on to other members, you've announced on a couple of occasions now that a deal is being done to sell the land at Wilkinsons Point to LK Group. How do you explain these announcements when, in fact, there was and there is no deal finalised? Do you accept that these announcements were somewhat misleading for Tasmanians thinking that the deal had been done when, in fact, it hadn't?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Not necessarily, Chair. I don't agree with the premise of the question because it's important to note that various agreements entered into with the LK Group and its associated entities, of course, have been addressed separately. As outlined, several of these agreements have been very successful. Of course, our Government will continue to promote business and investments in the State and economic growth. The opportunity that presents itself

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to - unlike Wilkinsons Point, as an example, a private investment in a significant retail, commercial and hotel precinct at Wilkinsons Point - I believe, is in the State's interests. It is worth pursuing.

The fundamentals of the proposed sale and land development agreement to the LK Group for the State to contribute to headworks charges in an effort to have the site development-ready; develop common user infrastructure on the site, such as the proposed Wilkinsons Point ferry terminal; and engage with the developer in terms of appropriate car parking on the site - it could remain a vibrant, mixed-use precinct. These works form part of our plan to activate that area in the northern suburbs, expand the ferry network, and further benefit connectivity and community engagement in the area.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - In February 2025 when you did announce that the deal had been done - to sell the land to LK Group - was that your understanding, that the deal had been finalised?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, because it was an agreement to keep negotiating the finer details of that. There were parameters pointed out in terms of the new non-binding shortform summary of key project terms agreed between the Crown and LK group. That was correctly, as you stated, in February 2025 - in fact, 24 February 2025, indeed. Mr Gregory understands these matters well, which I believe you spoke about, Mr Gregory, in the PAC hearing before. If you would like to expand on that process, I'd appreciate it.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - No, that's okay - I must have missed those parameters in the media release. Just before Mr Gregory goes to that, I will go to Mr Winter.

**Mr WINTER** - I was just going to ask about that as well, Premier. I'm looking at your media release from 23 February 2025, you said:

An economic boom for the northern suburbs will be activated with the Tasmanian Government reaching an agreement to stimulate private development on surplus Crown land at Wilkinsons Point.

It goes on. There's nothing in that media realise about it being non-binding. You said that parameter of it being non-binding was pointed out. Where was it made available to anyone that this was a non-binding agreement and not actually something that would directly lead to development on the site?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, there were further matters to work through, as I believe I stated in my media conference, including certain milestones that would have to be met for the developer, of course, [inaudible] proceed to the next stage, as I recall in the media conference that I gave. I'm happy to go back and look at that -

**Mr WINTER** - Your media release actually says:

The Tasmanian Government has agreed to sell the Crown Land at Wilkinsons Point to the LK Group at a value determined by the Valuer-General to enable the development of:

- A multi-use retail precinct;

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- A family resort; and
- A hotel complex.

This seems completely at odds with what you're saying now. This is a media release that tells Tasmanians that there's an agreement, that it's going to be sold, there will be \$500 million worth of development: yet nothing of that kind has happened in 14 months. How do you explain the media release, given what we now know?

**Mr GREGORY** - Chair, if I might just recap some comments I made at the PAC hearing that I attended.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Premier, Mr Gregory wants to provide some context here.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, sure. No worries.

**Mr GREGORY** - I think it's really a matter of how you characterise the agreement and the different perspective that applies to this. In terms of leading a negotiation towards a land sale and development agreement - to me or to a lawyer, the word 'agreement' has a very specific meaning. You're talking in a sort of legal sense. I think the general public would look at an agreement in a different way. What we, in effect, had in February 2025 was an in-principle agreement on key terms for negotiations. I'm not sure that that terminology would resonate particularly well in conversation with the public in terms of what that actually means. So, I would say what I said at the previous hearing that I attended: that I think that there are slightly different meanings to that and when you talk to the Crown Solicitor, they have a very specific view of what things mean.

**Mr WINTER** - Premier, I just don't understand how any member of the public that saw this wouldn't believe that there was a final agreement reached that there was going to be development after many, many years of waiting - I just want to understand how it was that this media release went out, given the fact that we know this wasn't the case - there wasn't a final agreement.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, I just reflect that the next stage of the agreement where we came to -

**Mr WINTER** - So you announced the next bit -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, that's how negotiations work. Until you sign on the bottom line to proceed with the actual development, including sale of the land and the like - and so it was a heads of agreement, in-principle agreement, non-binding agreement, to continue further negotiations, and that's how it works.

**Mr WINTER** - So from your perspective, from that point forward, what went wrong that instead of this leading to development on the site, it's led to a pause in negotiations?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Because we want to ensure that the Tasmanian people get very good value for their taxpayer dollar - and that's also a very important principle, Mr Winter, as I know you'd appreciate - and I want to ensure that, yes, the development proceeds, but it's in the best interest of the Tasmanian people. And so that's why we -

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**Mr WINTER** - At that point in time, 23 February 2025, were you aware or had you received the advice that the infrastructure could be as much as \$100 million on that site?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I don't believe so. I'm happy to check those records, but I'm advised that it's not the case, which is why we have to continue working with the private proponent and the developer to ensure Tasmanians get the best deal possible.

**Mr WINTER** - So you've now received advice from State Growth that the cost could be - I want to get this right - around \$100 million to activate the site and the department's current recommendation - this is as of late last year - was to cease negotiations. Given that advice from the department, that it could cost \$100 million to activate the site and recommendation to you that you cease negotiations, how do you justify telling the Committee that you want to restart negotiations next week?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Because I believe in the project. And, you know, today, Mr Winter, thank you for the bipartisan support on this. Incidentally, I put a shovel in the ground at Stony Rise, which was controversial, we had to go through both Houses of Parliament to intervene in the planning system. Why? Because it made good sense for a \$60 million development on a cleared industrial zone to proceed with that development - yeah, people criticised that, and I get it, but you got to make key decisions around this. I appreciate the advice I get from my department but I don't have to accept that advice 100 per cent. I appreciate it. It informs my decision-making but at the end of the day, we see what is in the best interest of the Tasmanian people.

**Mr WINTER** - So the advice is that the potential high cost to Government to be around \$100 million to activate the site. We also understand the valuation is between \$6 million and \$7 million, meaning that there'd be a net cost of up to \$93 million to develop the site. Where would that funding come from, given the state of the budget?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, you said potential \$100 million, I noted in your question as stated, and it's obviously - I'm not going to negotiate with the LK Group over a Public Accounts Committee public hearing, clearly, so that is part of the negotiations. We'll seek further advice on what exact infrastructure is required as well.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Just while we're still on that topic, the departmental advice - who made the decision to continue negotiations with the LK Group once this departmental advice was received. Was it you, as Premier, or was it Cabinet? Did Cabinet consider the departmental advice?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'll seek the proper and the accurate advice for that, but I've always pushed this project as Premier.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Premier, you mentioned the strategic location of the Wilkinsons Point land. Since the discussions about it with Government have started, there's been some other developments as well, including most recently the potential divestment of land at Dowsing Point by the Australian Government, and it's potential for housing or other development, and we've also had the approval of the Macquarie Point stadium development and the markets it may generate. Could you reflect on what steps have been taken by Government to unlock the potential of the land at Dowsing Point, and what implications that

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might have for the redevelopment of Wilkinsons Point, as well as implications of the Macquarie Point development which have emerged since the discussions with LK started?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thanks, Mr Jaensch, for the questions, and, you know, the ducks are aligning, if I can use that expression. If my memory serves me correctly, I wrote to the Prime Minister about Dowsing Point in around December 2023 - I stand to be corrected on that but it's to the best of my knowledge - simply because it represents one of the most significant opportunities we have to address our housing needs, and you'd be well aware of this, being a former Housing Minister, and a very good one. For decades, this area has been tied up in Commonwealth defence holdings, limiting its potential and preventing us from using well-located land to support Tasmanian families. Honourable member, the Acting Chair, would well appreciate the area of land that I speak of and the wonderful opportunity that is.

We are calling on the Commonwealth to transition surplus defence land at Dowsing Point into - in terms of a housing sense - productive community use and, of course, unlocking the land leads to new housing, new community spaces, new opportunities for growth as well. We want it developed, of course, thoughtfully and sustainably. We will deliver the infrastructure and planning [inaudible] needed, of course, to create a vibrant, well-connected neighbourhood that obviously supports families and strengthens our broader housing supply, which I acknowledge, and continue to do so, we need to do more on. It's about taking that practical action, if you like, it's about using land smarter, that's why I went to Canberra more recently, within the last couple of weeks, met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Marles, who's obviously the Defence Minister, I met with Minister Gallagher, who's the Minister for Finance, Finance Department, who's overseeing the transaction, which is why I met with Katy and met with Assistant Minister Peter Khalil as well, and I've been upfront and open about the need for that defence land to be open for further development.

Now, I see an opportunity to the investment we make as a State Government in opening that up, in terms of potential infrastructure, headworks, water and sewerage, and the like, to complement the Wilkinsons Point development as well. It makes perfect common sense to me - you know, a 400 lot housing precinct, not too far away from hotel development, an entertainment centre, being MyState Arena, other retail, et cetera, makes perfect sense. That's why I believe Wilkinsons Point comes into play even more in terms of that opportunity that presents itself.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Does it in some way help to reduce the risk of a development of the type that the LK Group is contemplating not proceeding or not succeeding if you've got that other development alongside it generating demand?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Again, I believe that they both complement each other. It makes good sense for both developments, in many respects: activating the northern suburbs of Hobart and it does, to use your terminology, reduce risk. I would say they more complement each other. The opportunity at Dowsing Point supports even more why we'd want to proceed with a half-a-billion-dollar investment, in terms of the Wilkinsons Point opportunity. That, however, all depends on negotiations. To the Acting Chair's good point, we're not there yet, but I'd like to restart those as soon as practicable, as stated.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - On that point, with the link to Dowsing Point and the potential there, do you think there's merit in developing a broader master plan for the Wilkinsons Point land

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together with the plan for the Dowsing Point land? Is that something that you've tasked the department with looking at?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Acting Chair, that is a good idea. I would like, as much as possible, the developments to complement each other. Should the development at Dowsing Point, in terms of housing, proceed, that may well impact on the design, format - if I can get the right words - amenities, enabling infrastructure, roadways and all those types of things. I would like them both to complement each other and not to be developed in isolation, would be my desire. They need to coexist - if I could put it that way.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Is that something you've asked the department - or will ask the department or whoever's leading these negotiations - to factor into the negotiations with LK Group?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It does need to be factored in. It is naturally implied, in terms of my view, and I've stated that in an opinion piece more recently. But it needs to be factored in, Acting Chair, yes.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Is the Government committed to developing the land at Wilkinsons Point if this deal with LK Group is not finalised and doesn't proceed?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Could you just ask that question again, Chair? Sorry, I just missed it.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Is the Government committed to developing the land at Wilkinsons Point if the deal with LK Group does not proceed?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, I want to get this right. We would always want the opportunity of Wilkinsons Point to proceed. Now, if LK Group falls over, and we're not able to reach an agreement, then yes, there's an opportunity there for another potential developer. If you meant Dowsing Point, obviously if LK Group and the Wilkinsons Point as proposed does not happen, then, absolutely, Dowsing Point needs to happen because of the urgent need for housing supply and the opportunity that also presents.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - You mentioned earlier that the site sat vacant for a long time and you've never had any other interest expressed to you by proponents. Have you been made aware of David Marriner's proposal for the development of the broader Wilkinsons Point and Dowsing Point area? If so, how can you say there's been no other interest in the site?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'll stand to be corrected, but I believe no other development - I'll go back to my original words. Are you speaking of Mr Marriner's stadium proposal?

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Well, it was definitely a mixed-use proposal. The one that I saw involved housing and sporting infrastructure, yes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Including, I believe, a third site - well, Mr Marriner's view on where a stadium should be built, I believe, included that.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Yes, it also included a rectangle stadium as well.

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. That didn't align with our Macquarie Point development opportunity. We put all our attention on the Macquarie Point development, as part of the AFL agreement, rather than elsewhere. Indeed, at the same time, we had the opportunity of course before us with respect to the LK agreement as well, Chair.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Sure. But you were aware of Mr Marriner's proposal for that area?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In the stadium sense, I am, and, of course, as you said, broader associated matters, but we were on a very clear pathway for Macquarie Point stadium, at that point - and still are, clearly.

**Mr VERMEY** - Premier, has the added Dowsing Point proposal, to your knowledge, attracted any others to look at Macquarie Point as part of a package on top of LK? Has there been anything that's sort of jumped up - any little nibbles out there?

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Do you mean Wilkinsons Point, not Macquarie Point?

**Mr VERMEY** - Wilkinsons Point, sorry. Not Macquarie.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'll have to check my records, Mr Vermeey, but not to my knowledge. I better check. But since the Dowsing Point opportunity has been presenting itself - and look, I've been keen on that for some time, as you know - it just so happens that I first wrote to the Prime Minister about this in late 2023 before their announcement of offloading defence land. So, we were in front of the game there, notwithstanding some of the controversy around offloading defence land around the nation and, indeed, a large number of sites in Tasmania which the RSL and returned service men and women hold very dearly. There are some practical challenges around training and those types of matters and where that would go should certain parcels of land be sold. I'm very pleased to see Anglesea Barracks of course is not part of that. But the Dowsing Point opportunity of sale, I believe, is a very good strategic sale of land for better utilisation of Australian and, in this case, Tasmanian taxpayer dollars.

**Mr WINTER** - Premier, I want to ask you about the Auditor-General's report. It talks about in 3.11:

In October 2024, State Growth shared the valuation report with the proponent. State Growth documentation on this disclosure indicates that the Premier's Office staff:

- received the Valuer-General's advice
- 'made the decision that the value valuation report be shared with' the proponent
- based that decision on the incorrect view that there was 'no active negotiation between the parties'.

Premier, were you aware of your office's move to share the valuation from the Valuer-General, against his advice?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'm not sure against advice. What I can be clear of is it always part of the agreement to sell the land at the Valuer-General's determination. So, at some point, the

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proponent needed to know what the valuation was. That is just the fact of the matter. What I've been -

**Mr WINTER** - Were you aware that the Valuer-General was advising not to share the valuation report?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, the value of the land to be developed was to be determined by the Valuer-General. As such, there were no concerns with sharing the Valuer-General's valuation with the proponent -

**Mr WINTER** - Do you understand the difference between the valuation report and the valuation, though?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It was a required piece of information that needed to be shared, obviously, to continue discussions on the development and sale agreement. What I expect is that for departments: 'there's the policy parameters'. I expect: 'there's the vision: there's the opportunity'. I expect departments to implement that policy.

**Mr WINTER** - My question was: were you aware that your office was directing the sharing of the valuation report?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I best recall these matters, my office is the extension of myself in this. I see no - given the sharing of the sharing of the Valuer-General's information aligns with the original intent of the agreement.

**Mr WINTER** - We actually had the Valuer-General provide evidence to the Committee and outlined why he would advise that the valuation report not be shared. Do you accept that it was incorrect practice to share that report with the proponent against the advice of the Valuer-General.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I understand that valuation advice was being circulated and shared with the proponent during this period. This is the advice that I had. As I say, it aligns with the original stated intent. In light of this, of course, and the fact that the valuations had previously been shared and discussed, the Premier's Office indicated to the department that it was reasonable to share the evaluation with the proponent. Again, it should be noted that no finalised land sale and development agreement has been reached with the proponent.

**Mr WINTER** - The report from the Auditor-General outlines that State Growth sought advice from the Valuer-General on the report's disclosure. The Valuer-General advised State Growth that they should not share the valuation report with the proponent because the report states:

- It is not to be relied upon by third parties
- providing the valuation to a potential purchaser is considered a potential misuse of information in some jurisdictions.

Do you consider this as just another opinion, Premier, that the Valuer-General's just offering an opinion or you should accept advice from people in those positions?

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I always accept and listen to advice. I thank the Auditor-General for his work. There are a number of areas that were highlighted by the A-G. I accept that and the department are implementing those recommendations.

**Mr WINTER** - As part of the overall agreement, part of the original agreement that was executed was that Mr Kestelman would not own MyState Arena but would have exclusive access to it through a lease over MyState Arena. The intent, at that time - I think and I stand to be corrected - was that was for the benefit of the Tasmanian JackJumpers Basketball Team and yet, with the sale of the JackJumpers now to a new entity, Mr Kestelman and LK Group have maintained exclusive access to MyState Arena. Will you support the continued lease of Mr Kestelman given his now detachment from the JackJumper's franchise?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It's part of the agreement, Mr Winter.

**Mr WINTER** - Given the -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That was the original agreement and I can seek some more information on that with you, in terms of when that was originally established, et cetera. It was the original part of -

**Mr WINTER** - You talked earlier, Premier, about the spirit of the agreement. It seems to me that in these negotiations it was difficult for you to tell who you were dealing with, whether it was LK Group or Mr Kestelman's family trust. The JackJumpers was actually signed into life in Mr Kestelman's family trust rather than in the LK Group and yet the lease has gone into the LK Group. We have now got a situation where our Tasmanian JackJumpers are presumably having to pay money to Mr Kestelman for the use of MyState Arena, which was upgraded with \$41 million worth of Tasmanian taxpayer dollars. Do you think that is an arrangement that is sustainable in the long term given the public's funding into that arena and now the privatisation of the club into a different entity?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will throw to the Acting Secretary of State Growth in just a moment, but no one can deny the investment in the JackJumpers and MyState arena was a good one.

**Mr WINTER** - It was.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I mean, these things take - you know, there is always criticism around investments but the JackJumpers have excited and, in many respects, united the Tasmanian people around a code of sport from every location, as Mr Jaensch and I would well know, very passionate about basketball in our north-west region, and every town across the north-west coast.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - We're just running out of time, Premier, I just ask you to come to the answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, I believe the investment has been a very good one.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Yes, it was more specifically around -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - All investments, all policies are a risk, and you take calculated risks and -

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**DEPUTY CHAIR** - I think it was more around it was more around the lease agreement, but I think Mr Winter can pursue that in another means because this is more about the actual sale of land - disposal of land.

**Mr GREGORY** - Chair, can I very briefly address the question of the lease - and I think Mr Winter's question was whether the lease should continue in the current circumstances.

**Mr WINTER** - I understand it's up to 50 years, but there's extensions and triggers for extension.

**Mr GREGORY** - I'd have to go back and get the lease and read it in detail. But clearly it's a registered lease and the terms of the lease are binding and there would be no cause for a termination outside of the options to exercise extension. It would be a matter of how those options were written and who gets to exercise [inaudible] -

**Mr WINTER** - Could you provide the Committee with a copy of the lease?

**Mr GREGORY** - I'd have to take that on notice.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - We'll write to you about that.

**Mr GREGORY** - But there'd have to be a breach of the lease to cause a termination ahead of time.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay, thank you. We've only got a short time left, so in terms of the deal being negotiated going forward, Premier, will the term sheet or proposed agreement be released publicly before a final decision is made? What's your intention?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Respecting commercial in confidence matters, and I've got to respect that, but of course, we would expect, given the public interest in these matters, to be open with the Tasmanian public and as transparent as possible within commercial confidentiality and other matters - that would be my intention, Chair. I'll seek advice on that, clearly, but that would be my stated intention.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay. That's good. Do you accept, given the Auditor-General's findings that due process hasn't been followed to date in terms of the disposal of land framework that exists, that that is particularly important that there is that transparency going forward?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Look, I said that I welcome the Auditor-General's report. I haven't criticised, as to my knowledge, the report that the Auditor-General has done. We've accepted the recommendations and there's always learnings. I'm disappointed it's taken so long to get to this point, because I am pro-development for all the reasons that I have stated and continue to State. We take good note of the recommendations of the Auditor-General's report. As far as I'm aware, the recommendations have been agreed to and are being implemented.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - That's great, but they do apply to future land disposals - is my understanding. They weren't specific to this actual deal going forward. But in terms of this deal

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going forward, will you seek advice from Treasury, DSG and DPAC, and will that advice go to Cabinet for a decision on this deal?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, absolutely. We seek advice from various departments, particularly relevant departments, on a particular matter that comes before Cabinet and we make that determination. Now, we get advice from across all departments. We take that advice, we value that advice. We don't always follow the advice 100 per cent, because we have other factors that we consider.

I'm pleased that we've, as a Government, been able to work with the LK Group at the beginning. I'm pleased with the investment we've made in MyState Arena. I'm pleased with the investment we made in the JackJumpers. It's been a risk, but a risk that has paid off and worth taking. There is always risk and every decision that we make, but we make them with the best intention of what is best for the Tasmanian people. The way that the JackJumpers have energised young people in Tasmania, particularly in this field of basketball, and more playing basketball as a result of it, then that negotiation, at that particular point in time - and I wasn't intimately involved in those; I wasn't premier at the time - was a worthy pursuit and it's worked.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - In terms of the advice that you received from those departments, will you publicly release any of this?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, again with commercial confidentiality in mind, noting the parliament's decision more recently around Cabinet documents and factoring that in as well, Cabinet confidentiality is still a very, very important part of the Westminster system. All things being said, at face value, I'm sure I will get asked the question in a media conference should agreement proceed, 'What was Treasury's advice?' and I'll answer it.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WINTER** - I'm just trying to understand around responsibility for the project, Premier. Can you take us through where the ministerial responsibility for the project has sat over the last couple of years, for example? I know Minister Ellis was answering questions about it during Estimates last year, but can you take us through over the last couple of years which ministers have had responsibility and which portfolios this project has sat in?

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - And where it does now.

**Mr WINTER** - And where it does now.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, I can take you through that. I will have to go back because there's been some movement at the station, Mr Winter, when it comes to some of the various ministerial responsibilities over this time, as you would well realise. But I have great interest in this particular project and as, indeed, a number of ministers have.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - So, will you provide - do you want us to ask you for that on notice and you provide a list?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I'll accept it's already on notice and I will write to the Committee and any other questions that we feel as though we could provide more detail to you, Acting Chair. We will detail that. I have a very clear timeline, too - a more detailed timeline that time didn't

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permit me to work through in my opening statement, because I wanted to make sure of the availability for people to ask questions. I will also detail timelines going back to 2018, if memory serves me correctly, right until now, and other matters that have been taken on notice. I'll formally write to the Committee, including all questions that I feel we could further elaborate on.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay, thank you. We will write to you seeking answers as well.

**Mr WINTER** - Assuming that you didn't hold responsibility, can you explain why your office was sending the direction that the Valuer-General's report be shared, given that you didn't have responsibility for the project?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it reflected the terms of the agreement - in terms of the purchase stated in the Valuer-General's price. That was the original agreement.

**Mr WINTER** - My question was: why was your office doing that directing and not the responsible Minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Look, I take responsibility for what happens in our Government, irrespective of a minister, and I like getting things done, Dean. That's what it's all about.

**Mr WINTER** - Was the Minister aware, whoever it was? Who was the minister at that stage, and was the Minister aware?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I said I'd detail who was responsible where and when, but I take responsibility for our Government. I get the questions. I'm being scrutinised. I'm happy to do so on this project, because I believe in it. I believe in opportunity and I believe in economic development.

**Mr WINTER** - That doesn't answer my question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I also believe that Tasmanian taxpayers should get the best value for money as well.

**Mr WINTER** - It's a really simple question: why was the Premier's Office directing the sharing of the valuation if you weren't the responsible minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Because I take responsibility for all ministers -

**Mr WINTER** - You sound like Scott Morrison.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and the policy of our Government.

**DEPUTY CHAIR** - Okay, we're out of time. We will perhaps ask you for a further response on that when we follow up. Thank you, Premier, for appearing before the Committee today, and thank you, Mr Gregory and Ms Morgan-Wicks. Thank you for taking time to provide evidence to this Committee.

The evidence you have provided at the hearing today is protected by parliamentary privilege, as I said at the beginning and I remind you that any comments you make to the media

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or others outside of this room, even if you repeat what you've said here, will not be protected. Do you understand this?

**WITNESSES - Yes.**

**DEPUTY CHAIR - Excellent.** Thank you very much for your attendance today. Do you have anything to close with, Premier?

**Mr ROCKLIFF - No.** I respect the Committee's time. Thank you very much.

**The witnesses withdrew.**

**The Committee adjourned at 2:15 pm.**