



Request for Expressions of Interest

Activation and Management of Dorney House

Issue Date: Monday 6 July 2026, 9.00am

Closing Date: Friday 7 August 2026, 5:00 pm

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1. EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST OVERVIEW

Council invites suitably qualified tourism, hospitality, accommodation, education and/or cultural heritage operators (including not-for-profit and community partners) to submit an Expression of Interest (**EOI**) for the activation and ongoing management of Dorney House and its immediate surrounds at Porter Hill, Hobart.

Proposals must:

- Respect the heritage significance of Dorney House and Fort Nelson, including visual impact;
- Be compatible with the environmental, access, and hazard constraints of the site;
- Demonstrate financial viability (it is noted that before a tender is accepted, or nominated, the Council reserves the right to make enquiries as to the Tenderer's financial capability and standing and request the information it deems necessary to assess the risk of financial failure if the Tenderer is engaged to provide the Activities); and
- Include a robust operational plan addressing risk, safety, access, transport, and environmental impact.

This EOI is an invitation to submit a proposal only. It does not constitute a tender, offer or undertaking by the City of Hobart, and does not create any binding obligation or process contract.

The City may, at its absolute discretion, vary, suspend or cancel the EOI process, seek further information, shortlist one or more respondents, enter into negotiations with any person or organisation, or elect not to proceed with any proposal.



Figure 1: Dorney House

2. SITE OVERVIEW

Background

Dorney House (CT 231548/1 and CT 152401/1) is the former family home of architect J.H. Esmond Dorney. Built in phases between 1949 and 1979 and reconstructed following bushfire impacts, the place is recognised for its architectural significance and its panoramic setting on Porter Hill.

The site's broader cultural significance includes the Fort Nelson remains (1909–1949) and a wider cultural landscape and is recognised through its inclusion on the Tasmanian Heritage Register (supported by a Conservation Plan prepared in 2007).

The original 1949 circular glass pavilion, was set atop a former gun emplacement, offering panoramic views of Storm Bay and the Channel. A timber and glass extension was added in 1955 but was lost to bushfire in 1998. The second phase, built in 1966 on a second gun emplacement and connected by a walkway, was also destroyed by fire in 1978. The current structure, completed in 1979, was rebuilt on the surviving northern gun emplacement, incorporating elements that withstood the fire (refer figure 2).



Figure 2: Detail of 1991 photograph showing the chronological development of the site

In 2006, Council acquired the broader Porter Hill property (approximately 34 hectares) primarily for skyline conservation purposes. The acquisition complemented surrounding bushland reserves to create a continuous reserve area. Funding arrangements included nature conservation objectives and resulted in a conservation covenant applying to most of the title, with an area of approximately 4.3 hectares surrounding Dorney House not subject to the conservation covenant (Refer Figure 3).



Figure 3 Dorney House Location and property boundary illustrating the area around Dorney House which is not subject to conservation covenant

From 2014, Council endorsed and trialled a dedicated activation approach (“The Dorney House Program”) intended to support mixed public use while protecting heritage values. The program emphasised active programming relevant to the house’s origins and setting, avoidance of major physical changes, involvement of diverse user groups (including workshops, residencies, performance-based uses and private hire), and an objective of maximising cost recovery and program self-sufficiency.

In 2015, Council undertook a strategic review that considered multiple operational models. A subsequent national EOI process (October - December 2016) sought adaptive reuse proposals that provided public access and community benefit, respected heritage significance, demonstrated financial viability, and proposed a long-term lease arrangement. The Council decided not to proceed with any of the submissions that were received.

Over time, site constraints including limited services (no reticulated sewer or stormwater), difficult access via a narrow single-lane driveway, natural hazard overlays (including bushfire and landslip), and extremely limited parking have materially constrained use. In 2024, Council ceased public bookings due to safety hazards and degraded access. The house is currently unused, deteriorating, and incurs ongoing holding costs. Council is therefore seeking new proposals that can deliver a sustainable operating model aligned with the site’s heritage and environmental sensitivities, noting that any future activation will need to respond to (and may be dependent on) improvements to safe access.

Context

Planning and approvals context:

The site is located in the Environmental Management Zone under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Hobart. Uses that may be relevant to this EOI (including *Food Services*, *Tourist Operation*, *Community Meeting and Entertainment*, *Educational and Occasional Care* and *Visitor Accommodation*) are discretionary and will be assessed against the Scheme's performance criteria and applicable overlays. Proposals must also consider heritage approvals and any building upgrade requirements (including National Construction Code compliance) associated with a change of use.

Critical site constraints (read carefully)

Access road: The existing access is a long, single-lane switchback with known safety and resilience issues. Investigation/design for upgrades have been completed, and the Council is proposing to complete the upgrade works in consultation with the successful proponent.

Parking: On-site parking is extremely limited and cannot be materially expanded. Proposals should assume a low-volume model supported by managed transport (e.g., pre-booked arrivals, shuttle/small bus, servicing protocols).

Natural hazards and overlays: The site is subject to planning overlays including local heritage/THC listing, bushfire, landslip and flood-prone hazard. Proposals must demonstrate a credible approach to hazard management, emergency response and resilience.

Heritage and setting: New works must be minimal, reversible where possible, and subservient to the heritage place and its landscape setting. Visual impacts, vegetation clearance and ground disturbance must be minimised.

Safety and liability: Proponents must show how they will address visitor safety, risk controls and compliance obligations appropriate to the proposed use.

3. SITE OPPORTUNITY

Council is seeking proposals that leverage Dorney House's seclusion, iconic architecture and panoramic setting to create distinctive, well-managed experiences. Proponents may nominate one primary use or an integrated model (e.g., tours plus hospitality, accommodation plus interpretation, or community programming plus limited hire), provided the proposal remains compatible with access, parking and site constraints.

In addition to tourism-oriented proposals, Council welcomes community-based, non-tourism programs that deliver public value and align with the place's heritage and environmental sensitivities. Community proposals should clearly demonstrate how they will be sustainably delivered given the site's limited parking, access constraints and safety requirements.

4. INDICATIVE COMMERCIAL APPROACH

Council anticipates that any preferred proposal may progress to a negotiated agreement (which may take the form of a lease, a licence or other tenure arrangement as determined by Council). Any agreement will be subject to due diligence, approvals and Council decision-making.

Proponents should indicate their preferred commercial model (e.g., fixed rent, turnover rent, hybrid) and the responsibilities they propose to assume for operations, maintenance and conservation-related tasks. Responses should also state what operating model is feasible under current access conditions and what assumptions are made about any future access improvements.

Potential experience and program types (indicative)

The following examples are indicative only and do not represent a preferred or exhaustive set of uses. Council does not express a preference for any particular operator type or use category:

- **Curated food and hospitality experiences:** premium, small-group offerings that are pre-booked and tightly managed (e.g., chef-led dining events, curated tastings, pop-up/seasonal experiences).
- **Guided tours and interpretive programs:** pre-booked small-group architecture tours and interpretive experiences that connect modernist architecture with the site's history and cultural landscape.
- **Small-scale events compatible with site constraints:** limited, low-impact, pre-booked and strictly managed events (e.g., small corporate offsites, micro-events, photography/film hire).
- **Boutique visitor accommodation:** low-intensity premium stays within Dorney House and/or small ancillary accommodation options, subject to planning, heritage and building approvals and servicing constraints.
- **Education and community-based programs (non-tourism):** small-cohort education, talks, residencies and partnership programs delivered at low volume with managed transport and strict caps.

5. EOI PROCESS

This EOI is not a tender process and is not subject to any regulations or policies that apply to tender processes undertaken by the City. This EOI is also expressly not an offer to enter into a contract.

The City is not required to follow any particular procurement or tendering process in connection with this EOI.

The City is free to negotiate on any terms with any person or organisation and is not bound to enter into any arrangement with any person or organisation lodging an EOI.

The City may require further information from either a short list of proponents or a preferred proponent before proceeding to further negotiations. The City may also decide not to proceed at all.

The City believes that the information contained in this document is correct at the time it was prepared. However, you must make your own enquiries and satisfy yourself as to all issues relevant to your offer. Any final agreement will contain a provision that you have relied entirely on your own enquiries and reliance on anything contained in this document will be expressly excluded.

None of the City's requirements and none of the responses to this EOI are binding until a lease is signed.

Council will treat information contained in EOIs as confidential to the extent reasonably practicable. However, Council may disclose information where required by law, for Council reporting or decision-making purposes, or otherwise as necessary to conduct this EOI process.

Not-for-Profit Applicants

Not-for-profit organisations are encouraged to apply. All proposals, whether from not-for-profits or otherwise, will be assessed against the same EOI evaluation criteria.

However, if Council identifies a preferred not-for-profit proponent, any concessional lease or licence arrangement may be considered separately in accordance with the City of Hobart Leases to Non-Profit Organisations Policy (**Policy**).

This assessment may include consideration of matters such as alignment with the City's strategic objectives, community benefit, organisational capacity, and the ability to maintain and invest in the asset, as well as any other relevant matters under the Policy.

Marketing and Media

This EOI will be widely promoted through community networks, print media and social media.

Timeframes

The proposed timeframes for the EOI are set out in Table 1 below.

Activity	Date
EOI opening date and time	Monday 6 July 2026 at 9.00am
Site Tour RSVP to Fiona Cleary	Friday 10 July 2026 at 5.00pm
Site Tour	Tuesday 14 July 2026 between 2.00pm and 5.00pm
Close of Enquiries	Friday 24 July 2026 at 5.00pm
EOI closing date and time	Friday 7 August 2026 at 5.00pm

As per Table 1, EOI applications are to be lodged with the City of Hobart by 5 pm on Friday 7 August 2026. The City of Hobart reserves the right not to consider EOI applications lodged after that date.

Following the EOI closure, the City will advise all persons who have lodged EOI applications whether or not the City wishes to negotiate with them.

It is envisaged that negotiations would then be progressed as soon as practicable to enable the City to approve the successful proponent, noting the property is currently unused and deteriorating.

Assessment Criteria

Submissions will be assessed against the following evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria	Weighting
Heritage outcomes: strength of conservation-led approach and ability to protect and present significance.	25
Operational feasibility: credibility of the operating model given access, parking and servicing constraints.	20
Financial viability: evidence of sustainable commercial operation and appropriate investment capacity.	15
Risk and safety management: robustness of risk controls, emergency management and compliance approach.	15
Environmental performance: minimisation of impacts on vegetation, visual amenity, waste, water and site values.	10
Capability and track record: relevant experience, governance and capacity to deliver.	10
Approvals pathway: realistic understanding of required approvals and timeframes.	5

Evaluation Method

Applications will be assessed by an Evaluation Panel, comprised of City of Hobart officers, with specialist advisers engaged as required. All Council officers and any advisers involved in the EOI process will comply with applicable conflict of interest and probity requirements.

The applicant's ability to satisfy the qualitative criteria will be assessed based on scores allocated by the Evaluation Panel by consensus in response to questions relating to each criterion and then weighted as detailed above.

The scoring of applications will be based on the degree of achievement by the applicant of the requirements set out in this EOI. A maximum score for each criterion will be given if the achievement of the criterion is fully compliant, with no risks and weaknesses.

The score will be reduced proportionate to the extent of non-conformities, discrepancies, errors, omissions and risks for the City.

Scoring will be based on the following allocation:

Score	Description
10	Full achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
8 – <10	Sound achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
6 – <8	Reasonable achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
4 – <6	Satisfactory achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
2 – <4	Minimal achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
>0 – <2	Unacceptable achievement of the specified requirements for the criterion
0	Totally deficient and non-compliant for the criterion

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Requests for Clarification and Further Information

If you would like to request any further information, please contact:

Fiona Cleary
Executive Officer – Office of the CEO
Office of the Chief Executive Officer
City of Hobart
Phone: (03) 6238 2428
Email: ceo@hobartcity.com.au

All requests for information or enquiries about this EOI must be directed to the contact person nominated above. Proponents must not contact City of Hobart Elected Representatives or other Council staff regarding this EOI.

Site Tour RSVP

If you would like to attend a Site Tour of Dorney House, please RSVP by Friday 10 July 2026, via email to ceo@hobartcity.com.au

7. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST APPLICATION

Expression of Interests must be received by the City by 5 pm, Friday 7 August 2026.

The Application Form must be completed in full.

Applications may be submitted via post to:

Office of the Chief Executive Officer
City of Hobart
PO Box 503
Hobart TAS 7001

Or via email to: ceo@hobartcity.com.au

The City of Hobart reserves the right not to consider Expressions of Interest lodged after 5 pm, Friday 7 August 2026.

8. CITY OF HOBART'S RIGHTS & APPLICANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Council does not warrant the accuracy of the content of the EOI or any information provided by or on behalf of it in relation to the EOI. The Council is not liable for any omission in the EOI.
- b. The Council is not necessarily obliged to consider any submission and may reject all submissions at its discretion.
- c. Prospective proponents must include in their submission details of any known circumstances that may give rise to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest, monetary or otherwise, in responding to this EOI or in the provision of the Council's requirements as specified or otherwise described in the EOI.
- d. Council will not be liable for any costs, expenses or losses incurred by a Proponent in connection with this EOI process.