

Bids for historic hotel stall at \$1.17m

By ROSITA GALLASCH

NEGOTIATIONS are continuing over the sale of the Royal on George hotel as bidding stalled at \$1.175 million at yesterday's auction.

The historic 1852 building which houses the Alchemy Bar and Restaurant over 590 square metres, with a 20-metre frontage at busy 90 George Street, Launceston, saw around 80 prospective buyers and watchers attend the on-site auction.

The mortgagee sale by Knight Frank did not meet the reserve.

The opening bid was \$750,000 with the auctioneer's vendor bid taking it to \$1.1 million, before it went up in increments of \$25,000 and \$50,000.

Knight Frank auctioneer David Webster said negotiations were continuing.

The party with the \$1.175 million bid said they were continuing negotiations and they expected other parties were as well.

Before the auction, Mr Webster said the agency had received a lot of interest in the property.

He said the location was prime Launceston real estate and the Thursday announcement that the Gunns pulp mill was one step closer, could be a potential drawcard for a buyer.

Hawthorn Football Club chief executive Stuart Fox attended the auction.

A spokesman for the club said Mr Fox was there only in an observing capacity and did not bid.

He said the club was looking at different venues as investment options in Tasmania.



Launceston Skeptics members David Tyler, Mark Fyfe, Tony Olech (kneeling) and Jin-oh Choi with new T-shirts for the Body and Soul Festival in Launceston this long weekend. Picture: NEIL RICHARDSON

Skeptics taking festival with a grain of salt

By DINAH ARNDT

EXPECT the unexpected at the Body and Soul Festival this long weekend.

Nestled among pet psychics, clairvoyants, natural therapists and crystal experts will be the Launceston Skeptics.

The group's spokesman David Tyler believes it may be the first time a new age

exhibition has included a sceptic booth.

"All we will be saying is: keep your bulldust detector in good order," he said.

"We don't say everything is crap. My mind is open, but if people make extraordinary claims then they have to have extraordinary evidence."

Since forming last year, the Launceston Skeptics group meets fortnightly at the Royal Oak Hotel, where all matters sceptical are discussed.

FACT FILE

WHAT: Body and Soul Festival.

WHERE: Albert Hall, Launceston.

WHEN: Today, tomorrow and Monday, 9am-6pm.

HOW: Tickets cost \$5 daily. www.bodyandsoulfestival.com

Mr Tyler said it was a credit to the Body and Soul Festival organiser Stephanie Woodiwiss to allow a sceptic booth.

Ms Woodiwiss said she

considered the sceptics the same as any other exhibitor.

"Everybody that's there believes they've got something that will make you feel better or enjoy your life better," she said.

"They (the sceptics) are no different from any other exhibitor that really believes in what they're doing and wants to share that with others."

More than 1000 people are expected through the doors to view the 50 exhibitors and free workshops.