

Consultation has fallen short

WHY on earth does the Minister think our fears about the statewide planning scheme are unfounded? In our suburbs, tall houses (8.5 metres or more) on small blocks (450 square metres or less) will mean tiny setbacks or none at all, and the shadow cast in midwinter will be close to 20 metres. Units will be allowed everywhere, they cannot be refused by councils and all the hard surfaces and few gardens and trees will cause run-off problems. These rules will apply in our small towns as well as suburbs of our cities. These are the numbers, Minister, and this is what the new planning laws allow. No spin. Was the public really consulted? The Minister says many groups were consulted before these planning rules or provisions were made.

A straw poll of the public would indicate clearly that few people have any real idea what the changes mean for them. There was clearly no public information campaign to inform us, and many community groups had no idea.

When we did have a chance to participate in the process and make representations to the Planning Commission most community representatives felt it was not a chance for genuine feedback.

It appears few changes were made to the actual planning provisions despite thousands of issues being flagged in representations. Do councils really have much power to save special areas? Recent decisions show they could have very limited powers to save special areas and character. Bellerive Bluff (known too as Kangaroo Bluff) has been rejected under the Interim Planning Scheme as it does not meet the restrictive Planning Directives standards imposed by the Minister.

Anne and Miles Harrison
Blackmans Bay

Growing pains

I WAS disappointed to read Peter Gutwein's defence of the proposed planning laws (Talking Point, July 3) because just like the opponents of the changes, he fails to place the planning laws into the overall context of Tasmania's population strategy, which is focused on preparing for a Tasmanian population of 650,000 by 2050.

Even with the relatively modest growth of subdivisions around the edges of Hobart, we have seen the consequence this has had on transport in the city. The new planning scheme, with its focus on faster, fairer, simpler and cheaper approvals, will do nothing to stop a low-density Hobart stretching from Kempton to Kettering, which would seem completely at odds with a population strategy that has liveability as one of its core concerns. The new planning scheme is a dud, not because it allows someone to build out my view – that's already happened anyway – but because it provides no coherent concept of what even a modestly bigger Tasmania should look like let alone a much bigger Tasmania if we have to absorb a substantial number of climate change refugees.

David O'Halloran
North Hobart

Local views ignored

THE new Tasmanian Planning Scheme is the local version of the Australia-wide move to deregulate planning. Tasmania is the last state to deregulate its planning system. Indeed, 29 separate planning schemes in a small consolidated state with a population less than many Australian cities does suggest a need for some uniformity in the system. But the statewide

scheme being introduced by the Hodgman Liberal Government has moved too far in support of the deregulation mantra.

It will be a goldmine for developers with the expansion of permitted uses which cannot be contested. Tasmania's heritage and lifestyles are bound to change, mostly for the worse. A statewide planning system seems inevitable now with support from both major parties and legislation safely through Parliament. Power rests firmly with Minister Gutwein and his team of advisers, who have shaped the details so that local communities are progressively excluded from planning. When the Minister published the Draft State Planning Provisions, they included a clause "where there is a conflict between a Local Planning Provision and the State Planning Provisions, the Local Planning Provision prevails". The Tasmanian Property Council was very concerned about this clause. They did "not want statewide planning issues driven by the views of particular councils".

When the final State Planning Provisions were released by the Minister, this clause was quietly dropped. The explanation given by the Tasmanian Planning Commission: "modifications are recommended to ... ensure the State Planning Provisions and Local Planning Schedules operate together in the manner intended and in accordance with the provisions of the Act." It has ensured the Planning Provisions operate "in the manner intended", for whom: the community, the Government, the Minister or the Tasmanian Property Council? For too long developers have had far too much influence on government.

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