

HOT TOPIC PLANNING

Three facts on the new scheme

THE new statewide planning scheme raises many questions, more than it answers.

Finding the facts is difficult, given that there is a glaring absence of a genuine broad based community engagement and public information campaign by the Government. Where are the facts in the commonly heard mantra of "faster, simpler, cheaper, fairer"? Fact 1: The Interim Planning Schemes (IPS) were introduced a few years ago and took effect before the public could comment. Many of the rules for residential developments were dictated by planning directive, with no opportunity for local councils to amend. Fact 2: In response to the significant level of community concern about the changes to neighbourhood character brought about by the IPS, the Tasmanian Planning Commission recommended that rules in the general and inner residential zones be reviewed as a matter of priority. Despite this, the minister maintained the existing provisions in the State Planning Provisions (SPPs). Fact 3: The inherent problems with the IPS have been rolled over into the SPPs, and made worse by an increase in the number of developments that will now be "permitted". This shuts out both councils and the community.

Residents are being locked out of decisions that affect them. This is what the new statewide planning scheme will mean for Tasmanians.

Anne Harrison
Tasmanian Planning Information
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Poor decisions will go on

WE all thank Michael Kerschbaum for so diligently putting pen to paper (March 22) in relation to Dr Rosemary Sandford's re-

cent *Mercury* article. However I, like many others, didn't have the same problem understanding the general points Dr Sandford was making.

Was it simply the Master Builders' turn to cheer from the sidelines in place of the Property Council that has led to this not so subtle 'gotcha' moment?

The commitment of individuals and community groups to return planning to the people and local government will only be enhanced by this blatant 'big end of town' immature 'cheer leading'.

If Mr Kerschbaum and Mr Wightman wish to contribute positively to the public debate, I suggest they concentrate on more serious issues and explain how by allowing a multitude of inappropriate commercial activities in heritage precincts (now allowed in the Government's State Planning Provisions) represents good planning or good public policy.

This short-term grab for development opportunities at the expense of residential amenity and heritage values is a matter that should concern all residents as it is an attack on both personal and residential values.

These poor planning decisions will continue to be made while they fall within the province of vested interests.

Peter Pearce
Battery Point

What of our futures?

I WELCOME the letter from Michael Kerschbaum (Letters, March 22), responding to what he termed "a number of letters and opinion pieces peddling inaccurate information by those opposing the introduction of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme". Whether a building is approved or not de-

pends on the planning criteria in place.

What happens if there are oversights or gaps? A builder's focus may be on developing a sound structure but who is responsible for the aesthetics, or the social and emotional importance of developing a cohesive community? I hope the new scheme is sophisticated enough to protect such important issues.

Last year I represented a group of residents opposed to a building development in Hobart, now called Winston on Churchill. It seemed that planning approval focused on the actual building development but the area of access and the characteristics of the site were seen as outside the terms of reference and therefore disregarded. As approval had been sought to increase the building development from a single property to 10 dwellings, it followed that traffic from the site on to Churchill Avenue could increase tenfold. In our opinion the area of access to the site was potentially dangerous, yet approval was granted. I received written clarification that in the opinion of the Hobart City Council's traffic engineer, the area of access was safe. Time will tell who is right. In addition, we warned the planning authorities that the site formed a natural amphitheatre and every sound from residents would be magnified. Once again our concerns were viewed as outside the scope of the planning criteria. As a result, new owners who believe they have invested in a home overlooking a tree-lined creek may be hugely disappointed.

Can we be sure that the new State Planning Provisions will safeguard our future quality of life? Maybe for builders, but what about residents?

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