

We need an inclusive style of government

FOR the past couple of months local media have been full of antagonistic and partisan pronouncements by the State Government.

They include defence of unsustainable aquaculture management practices; the revival of the forest industry, seemingly based on unlocking disputed native forests; the takeover of TasWater from local government; and local government amalgamations.

Other pronouncements have been implementation of the new, statewide planning system — “faster, cheaper, simpler” for developers, but not fairer for the community — and privatisation of public land in order to facilitate dubious developments such as the Mt Wellington cable car and beachside, private enterprise development on Crown land at Boat Harbour in the North-West.

Then there are the impacts of inappropriate commercialisation of parts of our national parks and World Heritage Areas such as Port Davey and Crescent Bay.

Developments such as these set dangerous precedents for mandatory acquisition of public spaces, and erode the protection and conservation of our natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage, which are among the state’s most significant tourism drawcards.

A more consultative style would deliver better outcomes, says Rosemary Sandford

Public land belongs to the people. It should not be for sale to the highest or most favoured bidder.

Mass tourism and the relentless pursuit of the private enterprise dollar, rather than sustainable niche tourism and investment in rural primary health services, are being championed by a belligerent State Government in a “divide and rule” approach.

A more mature, constructive and collaborative approach should be instituted. Governance based on a coherent, long-term vision for the state, underpinned by strong policies, grounded strategies, appropriate and sustainable development, and promotion of our strongest asset, our community spirit, would serve us better into the future.

Perhaps the Government’s stance is intended to polarise the community ahead of the Legislative Council elections in May, the state election in coming months, and local government elections next year.

However, communities and ordinary citizens do not appreciate being bullied by the “big kid on the block”.

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17 Mar 2017

A culture of bullying tends to alienate and promote distrust.

Letters to the editor and opinion pieces responding to the Government’s rash of provocative statements indicate it may be overconfident of its electoral supremacy.

In my opinion, a groundswell of community resentment at such heavy-handed tactics is building.

People want to be able to trust and respect their government, its ministers, their advisers, and the public servants, who are meant to serve the public and to give frank and fearless advice to the government of the day. Truth, integrity, transparency and accountability are fast fading as foundations of sound governance in Tasmania.

Instead of the present political war of attrition, a more positive approach would be for the Government to genuinely listen to its citizens and communities.

It should call for innovative solutions to community concerns, encourage the creation of impartial forums for discussion, and reach out to harness the wide range of views beyond the hot-house atmosphere of the Executive Building and Parliament House.

Whichever party or combination of parties is in government beyond 2018, it would do well to consider a more inclusive and visionary style of leadership than has been evident with this Government.

We should, together, endeavour to create more common ground rather than focus on those things that divide us.

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