

Submission 9

GPO Box 2029
HOBART TAS 7001



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Review of the Planning System
GPO Box 1691
HOBART TAS 7001

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Review of the Planning System. As the background paper to this review makes clear, the Planning System in Tasmania is extremely well reviewed. The Edwards Review (1997), the Better Planning Outcomes Project (2005) and the Legislative Council Select Committee on Planning Schemes (2006) are all mentioned. What is not mentioned, for obvious reasons, is the extent to which the findings and outcomes and recommendations of these reviews have **not** been implemented.

And herein lies the problem. What is the point of another review, one that openly acknowledges its predecessors, when the track record of those responsible for doing anything about the findings and outcomes and recommendations of these earlier reviews leaves so much to be desired. I would strongly suggest that the time and energy and expertise of the steering committee for this review would be far better spent in ensuring that some notice was taken of the huge amount of work that has gone before. Work that was done with the best of intentions and in the vain hope that somebody out there was listening and was prepared to act.

A review of the reviews. Not as silly as it sounds however when one considers how little has changed since the Edwards Review and how calling for another review can only be seen as a mechanism to avoid action.

The Edwards Review was commissioned in response to the disquiet voiced in some quarters that the planning system was not providing the outcomes expected of it. That is, development was being hampered rather than encouraged. Under the heading Attitudes to the System, Edwards made the following observations, which I would venture to say are as true and relevant today as they were eleven years ago, but little, if anything, has been done to rectify these fundamental shortcomings.

The overwhelming number of submissions received expressed support for the system, and this was also the majority view expressed by those who participated in discussion.

Opposition to some aspects of the Resource Management and Planning System was voiced by some who, in the Committee's view, have not yet come to terms with the system, or fully comprehend the philosophy behind 'sustainable development'. Others were concerned that their specific proposals had not met with success under the system therefore, in their view, the system was at fault. These particular submissions were an understandable response to disappointment in light of decisions made on the merits of a matter, but did not provide evidence of a flawed system.

It became quite evident early in the review that several major issues needed addressing. None of these concerned the structure of the system, but highlighted a lack of understanding, lack of leadership and lack of state policies. In the Committee's view, whilst it is the system that appears to be under fire, the performance of those either administering or using it, the lack of underpinning policy direction and lack of desire to effect change is the root cause of complaint.

In the interests of all Tasmanians there must be strong leadership to ensure that this Resource Management and Planning System is used to its best advantage. There is no doubt that the system has the capacity to provide certainty to everyone and to improve the quality of development. It can assist both levels of government in economic management, provide clear direction to developers and industry and at the same time protect individual interests; but to do these things it (the system) must be fully implemented and this has not happened to date.

Why should the community have any faith in the scope of this review that promises the preparation of legislative amendments to implement the reform options flowing from the review and to implement the changes following passage through Parliament. That faith has been sorely tested following the previous reviews and it is almost a certainty that this year's review will be no different.

I would ask the steering committee to tear up the scope of the review and commit to a review of the findings, outcomes and recommendations of all previous reviews with a further commitment to implementation within a 12 month timeframe. Meaningful action not another meaningless review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MALP', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Michael Lynch