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Subject: Form Submission - TPC Review
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Your Submission to the TPC Review: I write to make a submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission in relation to the new Major Projects Legislation.

1.

The whole issue around the Major Projects Bill comes down to this.

“The local council is incapable of assessing the major project application because it doesn’t take into account the views of the wider community or broader region.”

This quote is taken from the responses to the frequently asked questions on the Tas Planning Reform website, about the need for an independent assessment.

In short, the new major projects Bill is designed to circumvent the communities objections to the major project if they arise. And allow the necessary approvals against the will of the most severely impacted, those who will have to live with the project in their backyards, possibly for the rest of their lives.

This is the very reason local Councils are in place. They operate for the rate payers they represent. The negative impact made on local communities by “bigger picture decisions” made outside their area makes councils irrelevant. If rate payers interests are ignored and abused then, what is the purpose of all the regulation?

It is imperative that Councils be given the task of Major project approval so as the local communities voices are heard and counted. After all, they have often lived there longer than the new project and are the reason the Project has any legs to begin with (ie Services, work force, natural resources/location).

Council members as time goes on are becoming more professional and even politically aligned however they are all accountable to those who put them there, the rate payers. They need to answer the communities questions and hear their concerns. Some may be minor and beneficial outcomes for all parties obtained, however some will never be overcome and independent people who have no vested interest in the region in question won’t make the right decision to protect those in need, especially if they are taking other unimpacted regions into account.

I would hope common sense prevails and the government abandon this new Bill clearly designed to circumvent the planning laws that this state currently has in place and we are all abiding by. It just doesn’t seem necessary.

Simple solution would be to provide council with more resources to assist in completing the assessment for those major projects when they arise.

2.

If the Major Projects Bill is passed then -

As I see it the TPC must be given the authority to appoint all the members who assess the applications. The current bill suggests that 3 to 4 people are appointed. One from the commission, one from council and one field expert plus a further expert if need be.

To me that suggest's only one of the 3 to 4 assessors will be truly independent (the TPC member). The TPC have to appoint a member from the local council (who will be pro the application) and an industry expert who will no doubt be pro the project, so how can an independent assessment be completed? It can't, it is naive to think it can.

Only clearly independent people should be appointed on the assessment panel. The TPC shouldn't be asked to pick anyone who isn't independent. Effectively the TPC should have to power to have all 3 of the panelists as their own, if they can't find other independent people to commit to the assessment.

3.

Again, if the Major Projects Bill is passed it should only apply to any new Projects, as yet unidentified.

Any existing projects as yet proceeding with any form of Community resistance should be continued through the current scheme and seek approval through their councils to prove to the Tasmanian community that the new Bill is not the fast track approval scheme some think it is.

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