

Tasmanian Planning Commission Review.

I am extremely concerned that the Tasmanian Planning Commission will be sidelined and undermined by a unnecessary new planning processes governed by a fundamentally undemocratic and politically managed decision making mechanism. There is no clear evidence why the Tasmanian Planning Commission, without appropriate review, cannot continue to discharge independent professional planning functions that serve the Tasmanian community well.

Any policy change must incorporate the following principles for the community to have confidence in the government's implementation of planning responsibilities:

1. Planning policy must reflect Tasmanian community interests; there must be no reduction in community access to policy, planning and decision making.
2. Professional independent planning decision making must not be reduced.
3. Appointments to planning and decision making bodies must be based on relevant professional expertise.
4. Equity in decision making mechanisms must be retained and enhanced, Fragmentation of decision pathways and increased ministerial influence contributes to the growing community distrust of government and loss of respect for politicians.

In reviewing the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) functions the following recommendations are made:

- The TPC must maintain its function in planning policy development;
- The TPC must retain its existing role to review and hold hearings on representations, and report to the Minister on draft State Policies and amendments;
- The TPC must retain its existing role to report to the Minister for Planning regarding Draft Tasmanian Planning Polices and to amend any planning scheme to be consistent with a those policies;
- The TPC must retain the function of assessing Projects of State and Regional Significance and Reviewing National Park and Reserve management plans;
- The TPC should be given the power to make and amend the Tasmanian Planning Scheme;
- The role of the TPC as the body responsible for making planning scheme controls and amendments should be restored. The TPC should be made the decision-maker for State Planning Provisions and Ministerial oversight for Local Provisions Schedules removed;
- The TPC should be given responsibility to develop, amend and approve Regional Land Use Strategies with public notice and hearings.
- This review should inform concerns regarding the draft Major Projects Bill which is contrary to sound planning processes that may be delivered through the Tasmanian Planning Commission.
- The resources available to the TPC are inadequate for functions to be effectively delivered. Fragmentation of functions across new institutions will increase the costs of government planning functions. An integrated appropriately funded planning organisation is the most effective mechanism for cost effective delivery of planning functions, however they are determined.

- The State of the Environment Reporting function should be understood to be objective and politically independent, and therefore undertaken at arm's length from government by a body with review expertise. The TPC would best fit this role as the publisher. However, the S.O.E. report should be undertaken through a collaborative program with DPIPWE and other relevant organisations resourced to contribute data under an agreed rolling program. The indicators need review to be more effective in informing key changes relevant to risks the State faces. Resourced to implement this function will be additional to those now available, irrespective of location of the function. S.O.E. is a key mechanism for Tasmanians understanding the environmental changes and risks associated with climate change. The importance of this function is apparent due to the expected acceleration of adverse impacts from climate change over the coming decades.