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Planning law changes deliver reduced right for the public

Creating liveable communities must be the focus, says

Anne Harrison

IN State Government planning advertisements, the scissors slicing through the red tape are destroying so much more

It is galling that the ads are funded from the public purse because they do nothing to reassure the community the changes will deliver better planning outcomes in Tasmania.

Certainly Tasmania deserves better planning. Planning Institute of Australia Tasmanian president Irene Duckett captured the sentiment: "Planning would achieve better outcomes with a mantra of strategic, sustainable and integrated." (*Planning Institute of Australia*)

The advertisement claims a more level playing field, but who profits? A narrow development interest may profit but wider laws will be fairer as the public will now have greatly reduced rights.

If a development is "permitted" you will probably have no right to know or to appeal, so when that huge house goes up next door, with a wall 3m tall and up to 9m long, you may not be notified. The 8.5m tall house may cast a shadow near your solar panels and affect your privacy. The resultant overlooking may decrease your property value (a decrease of \$100,000 has been mooted in one case) and your street may become an onstreet car park as bigger buildings are now down to 450sq m in most suburbs. Those scissors will be snipping away at our quality of life, gutting our communities.

The ad claims greater consistency. The public may well want greater certainty, as do developers. If the community had the right to opt out of developing these new planning laws, the public may be accepting of greater consistency provided it ensures better environment quality. We want a consistently high quality planning system, one which delivers the best possible future for Tasmania through sound strategy and policy and has people, liveable communities and sustainability at its heart.

We want to see good design in the new planning rules. We are now seeing blocks go to multiple units and trees chopped. Biodiversity codes, soil reports and traffic issues. Cram them in — 24 units instead of the 18 requested by the community. Get rid of the soil, soft surfaces, trees and garden. Blow the stormwater problems. Councils can sort that out later, and

So yes, there is a greater consistency because more developments, now permitted, cannot be refused by councils. One council said: "It is getting harder and harder to refuse a development." And another called it a "race to the bottom" and said he is forced to approve.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission recommended a priority review for these draconian residential provisions but that

Meanwhile, those scissors are snipping away at local character, good design and quality of life across the state.

The ad says it will be fairer. Certainly not fairer for you if that house next door goes up to 8.5m-plus and takes all your only way to remedy this is to "go up yourself or move".

The ad says simpler. Feedback from councils is that their planning responsibilities are getting more complicated and less clearly defined "performance criteria".

The advertisements are not giving us the necessary information. They do not tell us about the extra ministerial powers that provide call-in powers for the minister when a project is unnecessarily held up or where it has to comply with two or more rules.

Councils are preparing local provisions now, but it is unclear how much latitude councils are given to look after a special place you think should have a finer grain of treatment, this may be disallowed. Historic Kangaroo Bluff, also known as Kangaroo Bluff, has been denied the protections of a Specific Area Plan because it does not meet the strict rules.

So those scissors have done an excellent job. They silence our individual and community voice, allowing development to destroy local character, our rights to privacy, sunlight and amenity, all with no assurance of quality design.

With an election approaching, we ask Tasmanians to consider which government will give us better planning. We demand a plan that has been properly endorsed by the community and is strategic, sustainable and integrated, one which allows ratepayers the right to stand up for quality of life, good design and special places we love. Whether it is units or huge houses next door