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Government unilaterally directs sweeping changes to the planning system

An Interim Planning Directive unilaterally imposed by Planning Minister Roger Jaensch without any consultation with the community, Councils and professional planners, will radically change planning standards with regards to residential developments. This will impact the liveability of our cities, towns and suburbs and undermine the promised roll out of the state-wide planning scheme.

On 10th February 2021, Minister Jaensch issued [Interim Planning Directive No. 4 – Exemptions, Application Requirements, Special Provisions and Zone Provisions](#), a directive that comes into effect today, blindsiding professional planners, councils and community advocates for better planning in Tasmania.

“Peter Gutwein, as the Minister who bought in the state-wide scheme, always lead us to believe that we would be able to protect local character through each Council’s Local Provisions Schedules but this directive undermines that commitment by circumventing the local process”, said Sophie Underwood, spokesperson for Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT).

The planning directive also affects local residential standards including:

- No maximum limit on impervious surfaces (concrete or roof space) leading to increased potential flooding issues and hotter living environments;
- No requirement for sunlight into habitable rooms or gardens;
- Bigger sheds allowed with no permit required; and
- Removal of rear boundary setbacks impacting privacy and shadowing.

“We’ve always said planning scheme changes will lead to a loss of local character and an increase in conflict amongst neighbours but this directive will accentuate these issues and take them to another level.

“Land use planning rules govern how our communities look and how we interact and they need review and strengthening. Instead they are being weakened by unilateral government decisions that weaken protections and do not meet community expectations.

“As Tasmania’s post COVID appeal leads to population growth and massive pressure on coastlines and peri-urban areas we should be taking steps to protect the things that make Tasmania special. This directive does the exact opposite.

“This directive circumvents the Local Provision Schedule process, where local councils work with the community to establish planning rules to protect natural and cultural values and local character. While that process was promised as a means to involve community and protect local values, it appears to have been abandoned by government.

For Comment

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PMAT was awarded the 2020 Planning Champion prize at the national Planning Institute of Australia awards. This national award recognises non-planners for their advocacy or for making a significant contribution and lasting presence to the urban and regional environment.