



PMAT Media Release

Political overreach: The Minister for Planning wants to remove planning appeal rights & assume the power to make land use planning decisions

Far from removing the politics out of planning, the Minister for Planning wants to create a new role for his Ministry to initiate planning scheme amendments. This places the Minister in the middle of land use planning decision-making, [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania \(PMAT\)](#) said today.

A draft legislative proposal, released last week, would enable the Minister to decide if a planning scheme amendment should be initiated - like the highly contentious Cambria Green amendment - and not be the responsibility of local councils as is currently the case.

The Minister for Planning also proposes to give property developers the choice to have their development proposals assessed by an 'independent' State-appointed planning panel, rather than by local councils, and to **REMOVE planning appeal rights**.

This would mean the community would be unable to hold developers and decision-makers to account, undermining transparency, and democracy.

Also, in the draft legislative proposal - at any stage of the council assessment process, the property developer can abandon that process and ask the Minister to refer a development application to the State-appointed planning panel.

"These proposals put politics, and the power of the Planning Minister of the day, squarely in the middle of potentially contentious land use planning decisions and removes councils and communities from having a proper say," said PMAT State Director Sophie Underwood.

Under the proposed changes property developers would be able to choose a planning pathway to bypass councils and communities and have their Development Applications assessed by an 'independent' State-appointed Development Assessment Panel.

This proposal would see councils expend time and resources only to have developers pull out if assessment was not going their way. This would be costly and inefficient, and create further planning complexity.

State-appointed planning panels have failed on mainland Australia. They are not democratically accountable, they have been shown to weaken robust decision-making and transparency, and will likely lead to poor strategic planning outcomes. In NSW, councillors from across the political spectrum [say these panels favour developers and undermine democratic accountability](#). This is the opposite to taking politics out of planning.

Instead of creating undemocratic planning processes that bypass local councils and communities, the Tasmanian Government should prohibit property developers from donating to political parties, as has been legislated in NSW, ACT and QLD.



A [founding principle of PMAT](#), a growing network of almost 70 community groups from across Tasmania, is that Tasmania's planning system must be independent from the Tasmanian Government and fully transparent.

“Giving the Minister the power to initiate planning scheme amendments, property developers the power to choose to bypass local councils and communities, and removing third party rights of appeal, is a blow for democracy and a backward step for transparency in Tasmania,” said Underwood.

The Planning Minister's recent [announcement](#) will make it easier to approve large scale contentious developments such as the kunanyi and Cataract Gorge cable cars, high-rise in Hobart, the Kangaroo Bay hotel project, large scale and high density subdivisions like Skylands at Droughty Point, and planning scheme amendments such as Cambria Green.”

PMAT believes it is critical to ensure the community's current rights to take planning appeals is not removed, and that councils must retain their current role as a Planning Authority - ensuring local representation and decision-making that is connected and accountable to the places they represent.

As per the public consultation documents [here](#), the community has until 5pm 30 November 2023 to make a submission.

For Comment

Sophie Underwood State Director, Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania 0407501999