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## Annual General Meeting 27 August 2023

### President's Report

2022 - 2023 was another big year for PMAT, responding to the many challenges facing us on the planning front. In some ways it has been PMAT's biggest year so far.

I'm always amazed at the huge amount of work our State Director Sophie Underwood, PMAT Board members and the many individuals in member organisations do on both local and state-wide issues.

PMAT is a not-for-profit providing a community service. That service involves working towards best practice planning and helping the Tasmanian community to understand planning reforms and what these may mean for individuals, communities and our natural environment. This education role has never been more important.

The Tasmanian Planning Scheme is complex and difficult to understand for many people. And let's face it, something many would prefer not to get too immersed in. But it is so important in shaping where and how we live and in protecting the Tasmania we all love.

In addition to the education role, a major part of PMAT's work is arguing strongly for changes to the planning laws to achieve what is in our platform – in the face of ever new pressures to water-down planning controls and reduce effective public participation in the process.

It is encouraging to see that we have had some positive responses this year to our efforts, although, of course, much more needs to be done and there are new challenges emerging.

Since last year's AGM the PMAT Board has continued to work closely with Sophie looking for ways to inform ourselves, spread the message about good planning and influence government and the media wherever we can.

Communication is key to PMAT becoming more effective and in 2023 we engaged a part time communications consultant to better design our online presence and publicise events and issues.

#### Our work in 2023

A great deal has happened over the past year – much of it in response to State Government efforts to introduce further planning reforms and initiatives that would put further pressure on our communities and the environment. From a Board perspective, we have also been seeking to make PMAT more effective and resilient as an organisation.

- PMAT lodged a major submission to the scoping stage of the Government's review of the **State Planning Provisions (SPPs)** in 2022. This involved a lot of effort and substantial resources – including special reports written by consultants on heritage, residential standards and the Natural Assets Code, and providing a submission guide to

community groups based on the PMAT draft. The SPP review process will continue until late 2024 and we expect to be closely involved in the review as it progresses.

- **Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs)**. The Government is now developing these with the aim of providing some overdue strategic guidance to the planning system. PMAT provided comment on the initial draft TPPs in late 2022, putting forward a range of issues and proposing some new TPP topics. The final draft TPPs are now before the Tasmanian Planning Commission and PMAT has provided a submission. There remain serious concerns about how the TPPs will be reflected in the State Planning Provisions and Regional Land Use Strategy reviews.
- The **Review into the Future of Local Government in Tasmania** has been a major focus for PMAT in 2022-2023, especially around the issues of forced amalgamations and Councils' role in planning. The proposals coming out of the Review had the potential to seriously undermine local democracy and a community say in the planning process. This has meant a huge effort for Sophie – and PMAT – in organising public meetings around the State to raise awareness of the Review and encourage local community discussion on the issues. I believe PMAT had a real impact here in raising the level of community debate. PMAT submissions were also made to the Review.
- The proposed **AFL stadium** at Macquarie Point has highlighted the impact of ad hoc decisions by government on good planning outcomes. PMAT hosted a Town Hall meeting in Hobart to promote community discussion on the implications of the Stadium proposal. We also made a submission to, and Sophie appeared before, the *Joint House Standing Committee on Public Accounts Inquiry* on the issue.
- A submission was made in response to the *Tasmanian Housing Strategy Discussion Paper* examining the factors leading to the current housing problem and emphasising the importance of planning in delivering good housing outcomes – including for social and affordable housing.
- The part played by **population growth** in the development pressures we see around us is increasingly being recognised and PMAT provided a submission commenting on *Tasmania's Population Strategy* in March 2023. The issue will likely become a larger part of the debate as a major underlying factor in the push to weaken our planning system.

There is, of course, so much more that Sophie does on a day-to-day basis to keep in touch with Alliance members and get PMAT's message across – including commenting in the media, working with local communities, briefing parliamentarians and talking to key people and organisations on planning issues.

The Board has continued its efforts to connect across the Alliance, with the wider community, and to support Sophie. A lot of this is behind the scenes and intended to provide a firm base for PMAT's ongoing operation – but nevertheless it involves a lot of work. A few examples are:

- We revised our **strategic plan** in March this year. This included a renewed commitment to developing a values-based planning vision for Tasmania.
- Our **website**. While we progressively make the original website more informative and easier to navigate, it has become clear a whole new site is needed. A totally new redesigned and built website is now under development, and should be up in the next few months.
- Our budgeting and financial reporting processes are constantly under scrutiny by the Budget Committee to ensure compliance.

**I would like to recognise and thank the many people who make PMAT what it is and allow us to keep being effective:**

**Alliance member groups.**

PMAT is an alliance and only as strong as the support it gets from its members. Thank you all for what you do individually on your issues and your support as part of the Alliance.

**Our State Director**

Thank you, Sophie for your tireless work and commitment to PMAT – it is what allows PMAT to be effective.

**Our donors**

Thank you to all of those individuals and organisations that support PMAT. Your wonderful generosity is appreciated. Our work is totally reliant on donations. Although this year's fundraising has been successful, there have been substantially higher outlays for our 2022-2023 campaigns than expected. We do need your continued support for the future.

**Campaign Advisory Group (CAG)**

These community leaders, representing many Alliance groups from across the State, are convened by Sophie from time to time. They provide key advice on, and assistance with, planning advocacy. Thank you all for your commitment and hard work.

**PMAT's voluntary Board**

The Board works very hard behind the scenes to keep PMAT effective and viable. There is a substantial bank of skills, experience and planning knowledge on the Board. Thank you all for your hard work and for so expertly guiding PMAT.

Many thanks too to **Eric Pinkard** as **Public Officer**. Eric does so much to support PMAT.

Special mention to our past President **Anne Harrison**, who continues to make a big contribution to PMAT's work. Thank you, Anne.

I would at this point also like to thank Todd Dudley. Todd resigned from the Board in July this year. He was there at the beginning of PMAT and has been a Board member and Vice President for more than five years. Todd has made a major contribution to the Alliance over that time.

In finishing I would like to say that building networks is central to PMAT, and this is something I think we should try to strengthen. I've met many of you, but would like to do more to find out about your issues – and to encourage other groups to join PMAT. It would be good to grow the Alliance beyond our current 70 members.

Looking forward I would like to mention that recently PMAT secured a substantial charitable foundation grant to support a communications strategy and part time communications consultant. This should make a big difference to our capacity to inform the community about planning in 2023-2024.

The Board and Sophie are always happy to hear from you – please get in touch to discuss your issues and/or PMAT's role.

Let's keep working for a better planning system in Tasmania.

**Kerry Burns**  
**President**  
**Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania**