

creating a unique sense of place, ensuring equity in accessibility to goods and services, supporting environmentally friendly and healthy lifestyles, and fostering social cohesion and community.

Local government, planners, place makers, economic development managers, trade associations and retailers work hard to design, improve and revitalise main streets to make

shopping the design to suit what was important for consumers for their ideal local shopping street (or 'main street'). We asked which shops and services they want, and which elements of local shopping places are important to them. Curiously, these questions are not usually posed to place-users, yet the answers are essential if we are to design new, and improve existing, towns, suburbs and regional centres where we want

being the most important. The top 10 were: pharmacy; restaurant/cafe; supermarket; coffee shop; specialty food store; clothing and footwear; post office; bank; department store and newsagent.

Overwhelmingly, a pharmacy was considered to be the most important store/service for an ideal main street. Across gender, age cohorts and location, pharmacies were consistently number one (only ages

bank branches have closed across Australia, while many post offices and newsagents are struggling with changes in consumer behaviour impacting their business models, and department stores continue to fall in and out of favour with the shopping public.

Finally, we tested our sample to determine differences in responses between 'hedonic' and 'utilitarian'

shopping as a source of joy or tolerated, a means to an end. They find no particular joy in the activity and usually want to get in and out of shops or shopping areas as quickly and easily as possible.

While there were no stark differences between the types of shops and services considered important (and a pharmacy was still number one for both groups), when it came to place elements, hedonic

retail mix; lack of empty stores and walkability were in their top-10. Identifying these differences in requirements is useful when we consider our local shopping areas need to cater to different types of shoppers including hedonic and utilitarian, and those in-between. It can be a fine balancing act, but without retail research such as this study, we can't be sure we are catering

included on their 'ideal' main street. Finally, this information is vital if we are to ensure our local shopping areas are vibrant, sustainable places for people to access goods and services as well as social interaction and cohesion.

Our next study, to be undertaken in 2024, will look at modes of transportation, time and dollar spend for city shopping visits.

that's great for everyone.

If you would like a free copy of the summary report on this research project, please visit www.shopology.com.au

Dr Louise Grimmer is a retail marketing expert from UTAS and writes the Retail Therapy column in the Mercury's Saturday magazine TasWeekend.

households installing solar across Australia; providing some of the cheapest marginal cost energy per kWh anywhere on earth. This huge groundswell of distributed clean energy was kickstarted with a consumer incentive – a generous feed-in tariff – that bootstrapped a multibillion-dollar industry, employing thousands.

If we zoom back in on Tasmania,

its passenger transport emissions this decade. *The government is currently consulting on its transport emissions reduction plan until November 29, head to recfit.tas.gov.au/ and have your say.*

Jack Redpath is the principal at Carbon Zero Initiative, which is advocating for a fast, fair transition to 100 per cent clean energy.

New planning proposal removes independent review

The Tasmanian government is proposing to alter how proposals for large developments will be assessed. This could affect the evaluation of projects such as a kunanyi/Mt Wellington cable car, high-rise buildings in the Hobart CBD, the UTAS Sandy Bay campus re-development, and planning assessments for tourism developments in national parks.

The Premier Jeremy Rockliff has already announced that, under the new process, local councils would no longer assess proposals for urban projects of more than \$10m or rural projects over \$5m. Instead, the Tasmanian Planning Commission would establish special assessment panels for each proposal. Currently in

The proposed reforms will remove oversight of development decisions, writes Anja Hilkemeijer and Cleo Hansen-Lohrey

Tasmania, Development Assessment Panels ('DAPs') are only used in relation to a tiny number of extremely large and complex development proposals – such as for the proposed Hobart stadium – and, in those cases, there is some parliamentary oversight. The proposed reforms will make the use of DAPs much more commonplace, while simultaneously removing oversight of those decisions.

Under this plan, outlined in the government's new Development

Assessment Panel Framework Position Paper, decisions of Development Assessment Panels will be final. Neither the project developer nor those who object to a development would be able to exercise traditional rights of merits review through the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TasCAT).

The Tasmanian government's reform proposal appears to be modelled on existing Western Australian planning laws, which have

replaced councils with development assessment panels. In WA, these changes prompted widespread and intense political controversy, involving both the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) and community-based 'Scrap the DAP' campaigns.

Allowing development applications to be decided by a single body (the DAP) appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission will diminish the democratic and community-based foundations of local council decisions. Mr Rockliff and the Minister for Planning Michael Ferguson have said that there is a problem with councils improperly rejecting development proposals based on political or ideological

motivations. However, the government's own data, set out in the Development Assessment Panel Framework Position Paper, does not support this claim.

Furthermore, removing access to TasCAT for review of planning decisions could undermine public confidence in the fairness and validity of the planning approval process. As we explain to law students at UTAS, merits review by tribunals such as TasCAT improves the quality and consistency of public decision making. In this way, merits review plays an important role in improving public administration on a systemic level, while ensuring both due process and government accountability.

The government argues that there is no need for review by TasCAT

because hearings by DAPs are similar to TasCAT proceedings. This is inaccurate. For one, if access to TasCAT is cut off, there will be no review process. A DAP cannot independently review its own decisions.

Furthermore, unlike TasCAT, DAPs are not designed to ensure independent, expert decision making. In their structure and design, both the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the panels established by it have been criticised as being insufficiently arm's length from government. Commissioners are appointed by ministerial 'nomination' on the basis of 'experience' in building, construction, and other planning related areas. Most of the commissioners, and all panel

members, lack security of tenure. Despite being required to apply complex legislative and planning rules to large-scale development proposals, none of the commissioners or panellists are required to have legal training. By contrast, TasCAT legislation ensures that the tribunal has a relatively high level of independence from government. The TasCAT president and deputy presidents must have the same qualifications as magistrates. Senior and ordinary members are appointed after a publicly advertised and merits-based selection process and all members of TasCAT have considerable security of tenure.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission's principal function is to advise and support the Minister for

Planning on land use and planning, as well as the provision of transport, infrastructure, and land development. The report of the Independent Review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, published in 2020, contains a compelling warning about the challenges of combining this advisory role with an independent project assessment function. The report says:

"The TPC's model of using ... a small pool of experts, many of whom are TPC staff and technically employees of the Tasmanian government, means decision making is not at sufficient arms' length from government. There are inadequate safeguards in place to reduce the potential for avoidance of conflicts of interest ..."

The reason most Australian states rely on local council planning processes, backed by merits review conducted by an independent tribunal, is to ensure that people impacted by planning decisions can have confidence in the integrity of the system. Even if people are disappointed by the outcomes, they can accept that their views have been fairly taken into account and that any legal discretions have been correctly applied.

Providing developers with an alternative pathway through a Tasmanian Planning Commission panel, without the possibility of merits review by TasCAT, is likely to undermine public confidence in the planning system and reduce administrative accountability.

It is strongly in the public interest for the community to engage with these proposed legislative changes. Details of the proposed reforms are set out in the government's Development Assessment Panel Framework Position Paper available at www.planningreform.tas.gov.au/planning-reforms-and-reviews/draft-land-use-planning-and-approvals-amendment-bill-2024. Submissions on the position paper are open until 30 November 30. The government plans to release draft legislation in January 2024.

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