



tasmanian conservation trust inc

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Proposed planning laws are anti-democracy, anti-transparency and will be catastrophic for ordinary Tasmanians

The Tasmanian Government is planning on pushing through legislation to empower the Planning Minister to remove assessment and approval of developments from the normal local council process and have it done by Development Assessment Panels (DAPs). The Planning Minister would also have new powers to instruct councils to commence planning scheme changes, but perversely, only when a local council has rejected such an application.

DAPs make planning arbitrary and a tool to be manipulated by the Planning Minister to get approvals for favourite projects.

There are only a few days left for people to lodge a submission and the Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania is [calling](#) on Tasmanians to engage in the process and learn about what is happening before it's too late. Submissions close 12 November 2024 at 5pm.

This DAP fast-track process will remove elected councillors, and the people of Tasmania from having a proper say on the most controversial and destructive developments affecting local communities as it removes planning appeal rights.

“This is cataclysmic for ordinary Tasmanians. It’s not at all hyperbole to say that these proposed changes to the way developments will be approved and land re-zoned is crossing a threshold for the breakdown of democracy. DAPs will take voting rate payers out of the picture” said Sophie Underwood, State Director of the Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania (PMAT).

“The people of Tasmania are having their rights stripped away and they do not even know. Development applications will be approved by a non-independent authority which is not accountable to voters or the ratepayers and will not be subject to the normal checks and balances of appeal rights. It will turbo charge planning decisions made behind closed doors, increasing the risk of corruption.”

“This is the complete opposite of open and transparent democracy.”

The government also intends to introduce new legislation that will provide fast tracked approvals under the National Parks and Reserves Management Act for developments in reserved land such as National Parks.

The Minister for Housing and Planning Felix Ellis has claimed that DAPs will be *‘Taking the politics out of planning’*, but the Tasmanian Conservation Trust says this is deceptive as power will be centralised in one person, the minister, who cannot be challenged in the planning appeals tribunal.

'This anti-democratic legislation gives Minister Felix Ellis massive and unchecked power to decide if developments are taken out of the normal council planning system,' said Peter McGlone, CEO the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.

"The draft legislation allows the minister to intervene for a range of subjective and undefined reasons such as: he thinks the development is '*controversial*', or '*likely to be controversial*' and there is a '*real or perceived bias*' on the part of the planning authority.'

'If ever there was a process being set up to facilitate corruption, this is it'.

'The government has justified DAPs as a social and affordable housing measure, but this is also misleading. The eligibility criteria for a development to be considered for assessment by a DAP includes that a project is '*endorsed by Homes Tasmania as including social or affordable housing*'. '*Including*' could mean only one house out of 100 or 1000 is affordable or social housing. There is no defined quota.'

'Rather than being motivated by a desire to do more for affordable and social housing the government just wants to give property developers a leg up through this anti-democratic legislation,' said Mr McGlone.'

For Comment

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