

25 Feb 2017
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Fighting back over planning law changes

BRUCE MOUNSTER

AN alliance of 35 Tasmanian community groups has begun pushing back against Tasmania's new statewide planning scheme at a meeting in Ross.

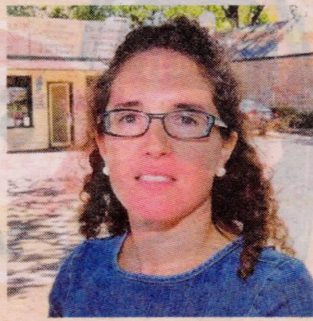
Meeting co-ordinator Sophie Underwood said Wednesday's approval of new statewide planning rules despite concerns raised by the Tasmanian Planning Commission was a disappointment, but not a surprise.

Ms Underwood said at their first face-to-face meeting since Planning Minister Peter Gutwein's announcement, representatives from ratepayer groups, progress associations, environmental and friends-of-groups had begun the task of developing an alternative planning scheme.

"We aim to agree on a platform which sets out what kind of planning system we'd like to see in Tasmania.

"We see this as a big election issue," she said.

Ms Underwood said a problem for many Tasmanians was



Sophie Underwood

protecting the character of the state's quaint historical villages and scenic coastlines.

"It is something that the Tasmanian Planning Commission has highlighted as an issue, because they are not sure that those values can be protected in a statewide scheme," she said.

She said residents in Tasmanian suburbs could expect surprises under the new scheme, such as the demolition of neighbouring homes and the construction of new homes as high as 8m, in some cases 9.5m, that could compromise views and privacy, without

warning or right of appeal.

Ms Underwood said the new scheme was a recipe for neighbourhood disharmony.

"Planning — most people don't understand it. It's really boring, it's complicated, and it's not until it personally affects them that they understand that planning is really important," she said.

But Ms Underwood said 300 submissions to the Planning Commission and packed town hall meetings held last year indicated that Tasmanians were taking notice.

Mr Gutwein said his Government had a mandate to fix the mess created by 29 different planning schemes and that councils, in consultation with communities, had the power to pick one of 23 planning options that would work best for their particular area.

He said the statewide scheme would make the planning system faster, fairer, simpler and cheaper. "For too long, the planning system has been like a handbrake on our economy," Mr Gutwein said.