

Ensuring a prosperous future needs a lot of careful planning

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HOW can we ensure liveable, connected, healthy communities while dealing with the challenges of population growth, housing demand, suburban sprawl and climate change?

This is a fundamental question facing our leaders, planners and communities.

Urban populations are set for massive increases in coming years. United Nations global population data predicts that by 2050, 68 per cent of the global population will live in urban areas. That's a massive

Strategic planning is essential to a prosperous future, write **Indra Boss** and **Anne Harrison**

increase from 34 per cent in 1960, and a significant increase from 54 per cent in 2015.

Australia is one of the world's most urbanised

countries, with more than 85 per cent of us living in urban areas, and nearly 70 per cent living in capital cities.

Strategic planning will be essential if we are to preserve amenity, character, quality buildings, green spaces and heritage in our urban areas, while also allowing for greater density.

Increased density and a quality urban environment need not be considered mutually exclusive.

Should we remove greenery from our cities by

subdividing our backyards, creating more impervious surfaces, thereby increasing urban heat island effects?

Alternatively, can we reimagine inner-city "brownfield" sites to accommodate greater densities? The Tasmanian community would like a place at the table to collectively reimagine our urban spaces.

A recent Tasmanian Planning Information Network (TasPIN) Forum titled *The Good, the Bad, the Ugly of Planning* was very

well attended, with a good cross-section of professionals and neighbourhood groups represented.

The attendees heard about a variety of developments, including the successful redevelopment of 40 Molle Street, which was nominated in the 2018 National Property Council of Australia Innovation and Excellence Awards. It is a good example of urban renewal on a challenging site and epitomises key principles for any development, including

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development of a brownfield site.

PROVISION of high levels of user amenity.

RESPECTING and maintaining amenity for surrounding neighbours.

Some recent Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal decisions were also unpicked, and their wider implications for the state considered. Attendees heard from citizens who have directly engaged in the planning process.

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Key findings from forum presenters were that new planning laws operating now as the Interim Planning Schemes, and in future as the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, allow many "permitted" developments.

Large buildings may block sunlight to neighbours and overlook or overshadow their gardens, while also being completely out of character with the immediate area, but councils cannot refuse them.

One presenter made the observation that developers

appear to consider "permitted" development standards as the starting point for developments, rather than the limit, thereby literally pushing the building envelope.

The "planning speak" of Tasmania's new planning laws also poses real challenges, with many ambiguous, poorly defined, unclear terms.

The tribunal appeals process necessitates several "independent experts", which makes the process prohibitively expensive, with some community appeals

costing up to \$80,000. This huge financial investment plus the emotional costs are proving a very real barrier to people as they try to defend the places they love and the amenity of their homes.

It is looking increasingly doubtful that new planning laws, meant to be "faster, fairer, simpler and cheaper", as the State Government repeatedly tells us, will actually achieve these objectives for locals or developers.

TasPIN endeavours to

provide workable solutions that focus on both the planning process and outcomes. In particular, TasPIN is seeking to define what community members actually consider to be acceptable as "acceptable solutions" in the state's planning system.

Future forums will be notified on www.taspin.net

Indra Boss is a professional planner and was facilitator of the forum. Anne Harrison is a retired teacher and a founding member of TasPIN.

* "Brownfield" sites refers to land that has previously been developed - especially former industrial or commercial sites.