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# Ordinary citizens disadvantaged

PETER Gutwein really does treat the Tasmanian public with contempt with regard to his ongoing wrecking of the planning system. Submissions on the Draft Tasmanian Planning Policies Bill 2017 were due on May 15, but the State Government has given contradictory statements about whether the public is invited to comment on the Draft Tasmanian Planning Policies, which were released along with the draft legislation.

On April 24, a statement was put on the Department of Justice web site saying the draft policies are “examples only to aid in your review of the draft bill. They are not intended for consultation at this time”.

The “Tasmanian Planning Policies” document does not refer to the policies as examples. The “Explanatory Document”, released with the draft bill and draft policies, explains that “the Government is seeking views on the proposed content of the new Tasmanian Planning Policies”. The TCT and a number of other stakeholders received a letter from the Secretary of the Department of Justice on April 7 inviting comments on the draft Bill and draft policies. Which are we to believe?

Some people may have put a great deal of time and effort commenting on the draft policies — has this been wasted? Local councils are expected to prepare Local Planning Provisions that are consistent with these policies, but it seems unclear how they can proceed with that vital task. The draft policies are meant to give strategic direction for the Statewide Planning Scheme and should be open for comment. The Government should restart the process and make it clear that the draft policies are open for public comment.

**Peter McGlone**  
Tasmanian Conservation Trust

## More consultation

MR Gutwein, Minister for Local Government and Planning, infers respected Tasmanian businessman and TasWater chairman Miles Hampton does not act in the best interests of Tasmanians (*Mercury*, May 2).

Mr Gutwein is the minister responsible for the new State Planning Act. He held no consultations with the Tasmanian community before the Act was drafted. It turned out to be about 400 pages long.

We were given the statutory period to read and make comment.

How many mums, dads or ordinary citizens who have just paid off a mortgage, or are in the process of doing so, can make a submission on a complex act of Parliament?

Yet we are directly affected by its provisions including notification of building works, allowable heights and distances from boundaries. Mr Gutwein has not spelt them out.

Such is community concern, two public meetings were called by concerned citizens.

So many people attended the Hobart Town Hall it overflowed. Mr Gutwein did not attend, nor appoint anyone to represent him. One would have thought he would make it his first priority to attend the second meeting given the concern expressed at the first. It was held at Launceston, in Mr Gutwein's own electorate of Bass, but again he did not attend nor appoint a representative.

For Mr Gutwein himself to act in Tasmanian's best interests, he would consult us, rather than decide what is best for us.

**Michael Meredith**  
Sandy Bay

## Unfair fight

WELL done Linley Grant, (Talking Point May 8) for having a crack at the new planning laws on the basis that they sacrifice amenity for the sake of development for a fast buck. I would also add that the laws favour developers with the deepest pockets and discriminate against ordinary citizens. The new planning laws appear to take a two-pronged approach to development applications. The first “prong” allows developments to proceed without the need to seek formal planning approval providing the proposed development meets certain set standards. Only time will tell whether those standards are fair and appropriate to all communities and that the corresponding reduction in red tape actually makes our communities worse or better places to live in.

However, it is the second prong of the planning laws that really concerns me. The law appears to allow an objective, measurable standard such as total allowable height to be overridden by subjective arguments such as “despite being very high, it really won't impact on the neighbours”. I wonder who is most likely to be able to pay for these experts — ordinary citizens trying to protect their sunshine, privacy and views, or developers with deep pockets? To add insult to injury, the legislation is filled with jargon only familiar to architects, planners and planning lawyers. Even when members of the public are well educated and highly literate, the time, effort, money and stress it takes to challenge inappropriate developments is enormous, so pity those citizens lacking such advantages. No wonder we say our politicians are out of touch!

**Jim Morris**  
Sandy Bay