

Planning rules must reflect the community

Katrena Stephenson says councils also new to provisions in statewide scheme

LAND use planning has a profound effect on our places and spaces and how people interact with one another.

Land use planning guides the orderly development and use of land; it protects the environment and furthers public welfare.

Principally, this is achieved through the process of making plans for something and the control (regulation) of use and development. Historically, in Tasmania this has been delivered in local communities via a council's planning scheme, with the council performing a key role in development of the scheme and its implementation.

The State Government's introduction of a single statewide planning scheme — known as the Tasmanian Planning Scheme — will largely, but not entirely, remove the development of planning schemes from local government.

Where in the past individual councils (or groups of councils) developed the content for their planning schemes, this task has now been undertaken by the Tasmanian Government, with a goal of up to 80 per cent consistency across the state.

The Tasmanian Planning Scheme consists of two components, the State Planning Provisions (state provisions), developed by the State Government, and the Local Provisions Schedules prepared by councils.

State planning provisions have nearly concluded their public input stage and the Tasmanian Planning Commission will report to the Minister on the outcomes of that process in December.

The Local Provisions Schedules will consist of a combination of limited locally developed content and the spatial application of the SPPs, via zoning maps.

There is no doubt that based on the draft state provisions there are many in our community who will have changes from their current planning scheme — to lesser or greater degrees. These changes could include what uses are allowed in their community; or the density of development in their surrounding area; or changes to what special provisions, such as protected vegetation or management of natural hazards, apply to their land.

For many, it is difficult to decipher what the state

provisions will mean on the ground in the absence of any information on where they might be applied.

While local government appreciates this difficulty, it will not be until the state provisions are declared by the Minister for Planning that councils will be able to commence the development of their local provisions, or look at how the state provisions will be applied locally. These local provisions will set out more detailed planning provisions for use or development in specific sites that require a unique or additional development controls not already provided.

Councils are in a unique position to identify community needs.

It is important to note that councils will not be able to make changes to state planning provisions at this stage. Local government has provided input during the development of the SPPs via a technical reference group of local government planners.

However, like the broader community, the overwhelming majority of the sector's professional staff and elected representatives are new to the draft state planning provisions.

Most councils provided comment on the state provisions and participated in the hearing process. As the closest level of government to the community, councils are in a unique position to identify community needs and make sure those needs are met.

The experience of council officers in applying planning provisions means they are best placed to advise on the practicality of state provisions.

The impact of planning decisions are felt locally. For that reason local government will stay fully involved in, and lead, the planning system at the local level. Local Government supports a planning system that delivers a built and natural environment in tune with local requirements as articulated by our communities.

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