



SUBMISSION – FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW

The Tasmanian National Parks Association Incorporated (TNPA) is a non-profit, non-government organisation which provides an independent voice on issues that affect Tasmania's national parks and other conservation reserves. The TNPA's membership reflects a range of interests in relation to reserved land, including considerable expertise in the management of natural and cultural values.

The TNPA has a long history of engagement with issues relating to development on reserved land through the opportunities provided by Tasmania's statutory planning process. This has included commenting to local government on development applications and participation in planning appeals. Since 2016 the TNPA has been lobbying¹ for key aspects of the Parks and Wildlife Service's non-statutory Reserve Activity Assessment process to be defined in legislation and is actively engaged in the ongoing RAA Reforms Consultation.

The TNPA is therefore extremely concerned by the review's option 5.1a, to "Refer complex planning development applications to independent² assessment panels appointed by the Tasmanian Government". Potentially all development applications on reserved land could be classified as "complex" because they require assessment against criteria derived from both the *National Park and Reserves Management Act, 2002* and the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act, 1993*. It therefore appears that a likely effect of option 5.1a would be to remove from local government any role in the consideration of development applications on reserved land. The outcome is likely to be less consideration of community concerns. It also appears that the assessment panel's decision will not be subject to appeal.

The TNPA has for years been lobbying for reforms to improve the openness and transparency of the current process for the assessment of proposed developments on reserved land, but the current proposal for assessment by a government-appointed panel with no right of appeal is a backward step. It is less likely than the current process to achieve a social licence for a proposed development because it will be seen by concerned members of the public as a mechanism by which controversial proposals avoid meaningful scrutiny.

The TNPA is therefore strongly opposed to any proposal to:

- a) diminish the role of local government in the determination of development applications; and/or
- b) remove or reduce appeal rights.

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President, TNPA
19 February 2023

¹ <https://tnpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Why-Tas-needs-a-statutory-process-to-control-development-on-reserved-land-.pdf>

² The recent media coverage of the role of Attorney-General Elise Archer in the appointment of members to the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal has done nothing to reassure the Tasmanian public of the independence of the "independent assessment panels".