

## Bypassing councils and citizens

THERE is a distinct whiff of immorality in the State Government push to abolish local government powers to regulate planning in their own jurisdictions, and to do it with indecent haste while the population is in lockdown with COVID-19 and cannot protest. It must be the biggest change to the balance between local and state powers of government since Federation and almost no one knows about it because the State Government doesn't want them to. The three public meetings have been cancelled due to the virus. There is less than a week left for people to voice objections.

This is worse than sly, this is making love to the wife while the husband is chained to his bed in the room next door. Once this Bill goes through, there is nothing to stop the appointed minister, henceforth Tasmanian Planning Commission boss, from overruling a council or citizens on any planning issue, whether cable car, Fragrance skyscraper or gondolas in Cataract Gorge. These and others including Lake Malbena flights are specifically mentioned in the document the Government released to describe its legislation.

What do they have in common? They have already been resoundingly rejected by the people of Tasmania after passionate campaigns over months, sometimes years.

**Jonathan Bowden  
Riverside**

### Panel not enough

SIMON Behrakis suggests those opposing the Major Projects Bill are some tiny minority and they'll still have the same opportunity to voice their concerns ("Stamp out power of lobbying," Talking Point May 11).



LISTED: Cable car protest 2018.

Major projects mean major change. The bigger the change the bigger the potential mistake. When you have the best place in the world, you want to make absolutely sure a major project goes through a thorough process to ensure it's going to make things even better, and that's not something you want to leave to just one panel appointed by the government of the day.

**Andrew Hejtmanek  
Howden**

### Not lobbyists

SIMON Behrakis's piece in support of the Major Projects laws would be risible if it was not so ill-informed. Lobbyists are generally understood as well-paid consultants with privileged access to those in power to make decisions on controversial projects.

Citizens making representations are not lobbyists. Simon's assertion the laws "avoid planning decisions being made based on political lobbying rather than a project's compliance with the planning scheme" ignores the fact that if a project complied it would simply be approved by council. Only developers of non-com-

pliant projects would seek approval under the law and bypass normal process. A council could also apply to have projects declared Major Projects hence avoid taking responsibility for difficult decisions.

Councillors would not be seen to be doing the job for which they were elected when it really counts. Some councillors might relish that ideal

**Andrew Wyminga  
Bicheno**

### Represent us all

ALDERMAN Simon Behrakis talks much about lobbyists and their impact on local elected officials. Councillors are elected to represent all ratepayers. I believe most do. I like to think my representatives are objective enough to assess all concerns. His comment "That is the reason that once elected local government representatives are told very quickly to leave political pre-dispositions and other concerns at the door when assessing planning applications, and only consider compliance with the Planning Scheme" leaves me no doubt we should be concerned about the planning authority about to be served up.

**Ray Marsh  
Primrose Sands**

### Too much power

SIMON Behrakis gets one thing right; the power of lobbies is far too great. However, it's somewhat ironic to suggest those protesting about the excessive power of entrenched business lobbies are a lobby.

**David Waters  
Mount Nelson**