

# The Mercury Sunday Tasmanian

## Major projects laws risk ‘radicalising’ communities, opponents warn

Community groups from a wide range of backgrounds are uniting to stop the Government’s proposed major projects laws, which they say threaten “the Tasmanian way of life”.

May 30, 2020 4:35pm

TASMANIANS from across the state are getting battle ready as the Government prepares to bring its major projects legislation to parliament.

From “pro-development” fly fishermen in the Central Highlands to green-minded heritage lovers in Hobart and Launceston, community groups from a wide range of backgrounds are uniting to stop the laws, which they say threaten “the Tasmanian way of life”.

With the legislation to be tabled in parliament soon, the groups – ranging from seasoned activists to fledgling residents associations – met virtually on Friday to discuss tactics.

They are putting pressure on Labor to make clear whether it supports the law changes and have warned the Government it risks “radicalising” communities by watering down consultation and appeal processes.

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“The government hasn’t made a case as to why this legislation is needed and Labor have not told us where they stand,” she said.

Tasmanian Planning Minister Roger Jaensch has repeatedly said the major projects legislation provides “no fast tracks, short cuts or easy routes” for controversial developments.



SUN TAS: Sophie Underwood, left, from Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania, and other stakeholders against the proposed major projects legislation convene on top of Rosny Hill. Picture: LUKE BOWDEN

But opponents are not convinced by Government assurances that the legislation is “unlikely” to be used for projects such as high-rises and that it has “no plans” to refer the Hobart cable car proposal to the major projects

“It’s not about what this government will use this legislation for, it’s about what it enables future governments to do,” said anti-cable car campaigner Vica Bayley.

Tom Allen, from the Wilderness Society, said the legislation “was a recipe for conflict” and the Government should learn from failed projects such as the Bell Bay pulp mill and Ralph’s Bay marina.

“Businesses around the world are realising the importance of social licence, but looking at this legislation it’s as if that’s an alien concept,” he said.

Victoria Wilkinson, from [Launceston Heritage Not Highrise](#), said the bill would “disenfranchise and potentially radicalise” communities.

Tasmanian Conservation Trust director Peter McGlone and National Parks Association president Nicholas Sawyer agreed, saying protest action would be the “only option left” if developments were taken out of the hands of local councils and appeal rights were diminished.

“If legitimate legal processes are removed, what options are left?” Mr Sawyer said.

David Ridley is one of a group of Central Highlands shack owners fighting to stop a 67-turbine wind farm being constructed near Penstock Lagoon.

Mr Ridley said the No Turbine Action Group recently became an incorporated entity, spurred on by the proposed major projects legislation.

“The current approval system [for wind farms] has short comings, but the Major Projects Bill is worse,” Mr Ridley said.

“We support renewable energy, but this is too high, too many [turbines] and too close.”

A Government spokesman said it was “assessing the merits” of the 213 submissions it had received on the draft bill, which included a petition consisting of 1000 template submissions from the Conservation Trust.

Labor’s Anita Dow said the Opposition was “reviewing and consulting widely” on the draft laws and would hold the Government “accountable for ensuring appropriate community consultation on major projects”.

The Greens’ Rosalie Woodruff accused the Government of “being deceitful” by claiming the bill was important to the COVID-19 recovery.

“We have all the legislation in place now for a successful economic recovery, which should focus on smaller-scale builds like housing, and developments that sustain the community and our environment into the future,” she said.