Representation No. 14

6th April 2021

General Manager
West Tamar Council
PO Box 16
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Representation about the West Tamar Draft Local Provisions Schedule - West Tamar Landcare Group

Dear Mr Vos,

I write on behalf of the members of the West Tamar Landcare Group who have resolved to provide the following representation to West Tamar Council.

We request that the Natural Assets Code mapping adopted by Council under the new planning scheme display consistent mapping of Priority Vegetation Areas across all zones in the Municipality.

We further request that Municipal wide mapping of Priority Vegetation Areas be undertaken using contemporary data inclusive of recent updates to TASVEG to version 4.0,mapping of threatened communities, threatened species habitats and natural wildlife corridors using consistent and transparent methodologies.

We note that the present draft Natural Assets mapping does not display this information in Zones including Agriculture and Future Urban in the Municipality.

We acknowledge that in such zones, consideration of priority vegetation in the assessment of resource development or other development is not explicitly assessed under the State Planning Provisions, but is it subject to other regulatory controls. We consider this is a fundamental oversight of the State Planning Provisions dealing with the Agriculture Zone in that retention and management of native vegetation is fundamental to healthy and sustainable agricultural production as well as critical to nature conservation, water quality protection, carbon storage and sequestration as well as the amenity and the unique scenic character of the West Tamar.

Native vegetation is a critical part of the biological and landscape fabric of our Municipality and we consider as a minimum the display of the true spatial extent of these areas of priority vegetation and habitat on zoning maps provides a reminder to resource developers to seek further information on relevant controls, and also perhaps pause for thought before acting.

We are also concerned that should there be cases where land zoning changes from zones such as Agriculture or Future Urban to a zoning where Priority Vegetation Areas are assessable, incomplete mapping of this important layer may mean that existing vegetation may not be considered under the relevant codes. We therefore consider that transparent disclosure of all Priority Vegetation Areas in the Municipality is required to allow for reasonable land use decisions by proponents irrelevant of land zoning.

As you would appreciate, West Tamar Landcare has for the past 28 years worked with community and landowners to foster sustainable and caring approaches to land management and biodiversity conservation. We consider the West Tamar to be an area of outstanding biodiversity value as well a highly productive agricultural area. We feel that native vegetation provides considerable benefits for agriculture and that to ignore the fundamental importance of natural areas in the matrix of farming is adverse to sustainable and viable systems into the future.

This approach also diminishes West Tamar's image as a 'Clean Green' farming area.

We believe that the great majority of present landowners in the Municipality share a similar view in regards balanced land use, and that by and large our natural systems are in good hands.

However, as land values increase, and demand for agricultural expansion and diversification grows, new Resource Development proposals need to protect Natural Assets including priority vegetation and landscape connectivity. We rely on planning schemes and other regulation to ensure that minimum standards are maintained across all enterprises and that land use decisions are socially, economically and environmentally sound. This is the case in the Rural Zone and we think it should apply equally in the Agriculture Zone.

Our hope is that the display of Priority Vegetation in the Natural Assets mapping across all zones will foster and support this ethic, and ethic of landcare.

We are happy to discuss this with you or Council by way of a meeting at your convenience should it be required.

Yours sincerely

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