

# Representation to the DTPP

June 2023

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## Poatina Village Body Corporate

Strata Title: 120167

Gordon St, Poatina

Tasmania 7302

25 June 2023

To the Tasmanian Planning Commissioner  
Tasmanian Planning Commission,  
GPO Box 1691, Hobart 7001  
[tpc@planning.tas.gov.au](mailto:tpc@planning.tas.gov.au)

We understand that the Tasmanian Government intends to introduce legislation changes to prepare new Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPP) to give strategic direction to Tasmania's planning system including principles to support economic development and the future needs of the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the *Draft Tasmanian Planning Policies (DTPP)*. We applaud the attempt to establish a higher order of planning principles and policies to guide the implementation of planning schemes.

There are, however, some key aspects of the proposed policies that would put Poatina Village, the community and its economic viability at risk. These include, but not restricted to:

1. Strategy 4 in the DTPP states 'Prioritise growth of settlements that are within the higher tiers of the settlement hierarchy' suggests a clear preclusion of development in small communities / settlements such as Poatina.
2. Strategy 6: 'Promote the preparation of structure plans that provide for the effective planning and management of land use and development within a settlement, or part of a settlement, that, as a minimum, considers:...' The import of this policy is to create an onerous impost on smaller communities such as Poatina.

### Strategies Create a Problem

The Poatina Body Corporate and village members, like the Tasmanian Government, value planning as an instrument to support the current and future well-being of Tasmanian communities. As a village community, our own planning principles, policies and meetings provide a forum to progress Poatina's aspirations: what we want our village, our community, our economy, our infrastructure, our landscapes to look like, and how we want them to function.

Our planning includes current and future land use and infrastructure decision-making and proposals. We apply a strategic approach to the long-term use and development of our land, buildings and infrastructure with the aim of protecting the things that make Poatina village such a special place: our ethos, our hospitality, our liveable community, our unique natural environments, and our diverse community, social and economic opportunities.

There are several key elements in the draft policies that would severely limit the development of the Poatina Village Community and would threaten the economic and social viability of

the village community. The proposed policy would exclude Poatina as a small settlement from any 'priority' development...the very thing that the Village needs for future thriving.

In May 2022, The Tasmanian Planning Commission hearing supported Poatina's Representation on the LPPs as a **Particular Purpose Zone**, though that amendment is yet to be finalised. The TPP as drafted and proposed would run counter to the intent of both the purpose and the planning support.

Strategy 4 in the DTPP states 'Prioritise growth of settlements that are within the higher tiers of the settlement hierarchy' suggests a clear preclusion of development in small communities / settlements such as Poatina. This would seem to mean that as the TPP's are currently drafted, Poatina will not be able to develop to meet to provide for growth in order to meet present and future demand and purpose as it appears that, in the TPP's all growth must be 'prioritised' to larger settlements. Effectively this means that Poatina will be confined to the existing Village zoned area for any growth in housing and services.

Similarly Strategy 10 - '*Encourage the concentration of commercial, administrative, major retail, entertainment and cultural use and development within activity centres that are highly accessible by public and active transport*' - is exclusionary and denies the strengthening of the regional economies being driven by small settlements such as Poatina.

Poatina is a different kind of settlement to almost all other small towns and villages in Tasmania and requires a different approach.

1. Poatina is unlike any other small settlement in that it through the **Poatina Village Body Corporate (PVBC)** owns, funds and manages its own infrastructure assets. The Common Property includes roads, footpaths, water and reticulation, sewerage, storm water, electrical infrastructure. **Fusion Australia** as a major Unitholder in PVBC owns and manages the natural forest and open grasslands around the residential precinct. See section below *Self-owned and Managed Infrastructure*.
2. Developing an appropriate amount of suitable housing is critical for the future viability of the Village. See the section below *The Ideal Community Population*.
3. The original purposes of Poatina as a private and intentional community, after Fusion Australia purchased the property from Hydro in 1995, remains and are enshrined in the Poatina Village Body Corporate By-Laws as a Strata Title under the Strata Titles Act of 1998. The purpose endures. The Planning Policy as proposed, would hinder and reduce the ability of the community to achieve those purposes.
4. Any future strategic and other development of Poatina must enable and build the capacity of the Poatina Community to continue to achieve those purposes. See *Original and Enduring Purpose* below.

Currently, Poatina is a community of 112 people. It is critical that the community is enabled to manage itself to build economic sustainability, and strengthen local, state and national partnerships to establish sustainable and appropriate ventures. An increased resident population will provide additional volunteer and paid labour and skills to provide the economic base for a sustainable village.

We know from work undertaken to support the Draft LPS representation that this will require modest growth that cannot be fully accommodated through infill development, although this definitely forms part of our approach.

## **Brief Background**

The commercial and social enterprises consist of a motel/conferencing facility, a general store, a service station, an opportunity shop, a tea lounge with an adjacent art gallery, a gift shop, a part-time community post office agency, a golf club and an arts centre in the area to the south of the village itself. These enterprises all depend heavily on volunteer time and skill – provided by community members. Parents report the community as a beautiful peri urban setting in a rural environment to raise their children.

Poatina was set up as a Body Corporate in order to be able to attract people who wanted to join the community to fulfill its purpose and to manage the infrastructure of the village. The community and its purpose provided, and continues to provide, a measure of social cohesion. It also signals to intending residents the nature of the community and the need for significant volunteer contribution to maintain the village and its enterprises.

Since 1995 there have been ebbs and flows and at this time there is available capacity for new ideas and opportunities. Key strategies include conferencing, training, arts, sustainability, enterprise, and tourism, underpinned by intentional community life.

The Strata Scheme includes undeveloped land (owned by Fusion Property Pty Ltd) that provides opportunity for existing and potential rural enterprises to develop, e.g. orchards, vegetable production, animal husbandry, etc. Some of the more scenic forested areas are used for nature-based activities (e.g. walking tracks) and more established activities (e.g. Art Centre – Hot Glass Workshop and outdoor adventure activities).

The By-Laws of the Poatina Strata Title in the section The Underlying Philosophy, Aims and Objectives of Poatina Village explicitly state the original purposes of Poatina Village and its community after it was purchased from Hydro-Electric Commission. As individual lots are resold, new owners and residents still sign up to that statement ensuring that these purposes endure.

The Chalet (motel / backpacker) together with the community hall complex is used for conferences, alongside dedicated guest and tourist accommodation for larger groups e.g. seasonal workers.

For over 25 years Fusion and Poatina have worked with others in the Northern Midlands and Northern Tasmania to build a community that brings life to those who spend time in the village, region, and state.

### **The Ideal Community Population**

A central question in maintaining a viable intentional community is what is the optimum or ideal number and composition of a community. Over time there has been a range of anthropological and sociological research done on precisely that question. A common reference point used by anthropologists is what is known as 'Dunbar's Number,' generally in the range of 150 - 180.

Based on the experience of viable intentional communities over the past 50-100 years, it has become clear to the Poatina Communitarianity that we should be working to build and maintain a population of approximately 180 permanent residents fully contributing to community life. The current population is 112, with little room for further expansion. . A population of this proposed level would enable viability on several fronts:

### 1. Economic Viability and Thriving:

- a. The Poatina Chalet (Golden Chain Motel) and Hostel including holiday and RV accommodation. Along with normal hotel accommodation, the Chalet provides for local, state, national and international levels of conferencing and retreats. Poatina residents volunteer their time and skills to support the Chalet and other enterprises listed below.
- b. The Poatina Chalet provides accommodation for groups of pickers, crews working on infrastructure projects, Hydro workers and agricultural service workers.
- c. Residential spend on community-run enterprises such as the General Store, Gift Shop, Ampol Service Station, Post Office, Tiers tea Loung café, Art Gallery, etc.
- d. In addition, there are a growing number of home-based enterprises including those that have local, state, national and international impact such as 'Big Bite Dutch Treats', 'Humanimals Project', Russell McKane Art, International Gaming Development, Fabric dyeing, 'Rock Salt Arts', Rare Breed Poultry Breeding, Classical Composition, Singing Teacher, Card making and more.
- e. A critical mass of Body Corporate levies-income to ensure infrastructure and common property is fully invested. Because of the community's unique responsibility to own and manage all its own infrastructure (sewerage, lighting, roads, access, and common property etc.) - without Council and other government funding - the more households that can contribute financially and in-kind to the Body Corporate the stronger the capacity of the community will be to develop and thrive.
- f. Promote greater innovation and local employment for residents providing services such as mowing, cleaning, mechanics, maintenance, renovation and construction etc

### 2. Social and Organisational Viability:

- a. A reasonably sized (approx.180) and appropriately diverse population (age, socio-political, professional/vocational background, family and other key characteristics) is most likely to contain the set of skills needed for a strong and sustainable community.
- b. Poatina is heavily reliant on resident volunteers contributing in a wide range of ways to both enterprises and community facilities. Whilst some of the enterprises are employing staff, all are reliant on volunteers to remain viable and to make the tourist and guest experience engaging.
- c. The village is semi-remote from essential services such as public transport, medical and affiliated services, mechanical and hardware services. The community strongly supports each other in meeting those needs. The greater the population (within reason) the better those needs can be met.

### 3. Environmental Sustainability and Enhancement:

- a. Capacity to manage the land and provide safe and productive grasslands, parklands, golf course, water courses and forests is greatly increased.
- b. Stewardship and perma-culture - the community is seeking an increase in the population of those who share these values and come with skills to work in harmony with and enhance the natural environment.

The community is engaging expert (development, town planning and sociological) input into establishing a development strategy and is having ongoing discussions with potential

philanthropists and appropriate investors/owners committed to providing low-cost, innovative, eco-efficient and attractive housing.

### **Self-owned and Managed Infrastructure**

Unlike most township or village communities that are under the administration of a local council and other public utilities, Poatina manages - at its own cost - a comprehensive infrastructure including sewerage, water, lighting, roads, footpaths, public facilities, open spaces and other Common Property.

When the Poatina Village was purchased in 1995 by Fusion Australia to meet the objectives outlined in the original and enduring purposes, the Body Corporate inherited an excellent but ageing infrastructure that required both ongoing maintenance and eventually renovation or replacement.

With a few exceptions, funding for the maintenance, renovation and improvement of all infrastructure within the Poatina is raised by levies and resources paid and raised by unitholders and philanthropic supporters. While the Body Corporate is financially self-sufficient, it receives volunteer labour to reduce levies to unit holders.

On the private land owned by Fusion Australia, some of the facilities such as fencing, gates, fire access has been supported from philanthropic resources and resident donations and time.

The Fire Station is made available by the Village community to the local Tas Fire chapter free of charge including electricity and water. This Fire Station houses the fire truck, PPE and other necessary equipment. Ambulance Tasmania appointed an active Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the village in 2012 consisting of village-based Volunteer Ambulance Officers.

Since 2012 The Body Corporate has commenced a program of investing in upgrading an ageing infrastructure (including sewerage system, roads, sewer mains in the residential precinct, introduction of an LED lighting program for pedestrians etc.) with a focus on both renovation and preventative measures. The infrastructure improvement program has been an intentional strategy to:

1. Reduce risk of major breakdown and consequent expense,
2. To make every effort to build the foundations for a sustainable future,
3. To meet projected demand created by needed growth and enterprise,
4. Setting the Village up for the next generation and future development by building efficiency and reliability.

### **Original and Enduring Purpose**

The By-Laws of the Poatina Strata Title in the section The Underlying Philosophy, Aims and Objectives of Poatina Village explicitly state the original purposes of Poatina Village and its community after it was purchased from Hydro. New owners and residents still sign up to that statement ensuring that these purposes endure.

At the heart of these objectives is the intent to provide a safe secure place for individuals and families and along with programmes and services that support them in their need and provide opportunities for their future. These purposes promote the importance of a supporting community with a diversity of skills and worldviews and entrepreneurship.

These original Purposes were updated in 2012/13 through a comprehensive collaborative process between Fusion Australia, the Community and the Body Corporate and reflects the lived experience and aspirations of the Poatina Community.

The purpose agreed to by all remains essentially the same as the original statement, though it is somewhat more contemporary. The new purposes incorporate in addition, the place of art and creativity; continuing the support of individuals and families in vulnerable circumstances; the important place of hospitality for tourism and enterprises; sustainability of all our social, physical, natural and economic environments; supporting the objectives of Fusion; and the development of programs that build the capacity of all through learning and education.

### **In Conclusion**

Whilst the Planning Policies as proposed would not change what Poatina does it will hamper future development and capacity to achieve its social, economic, environmental and spiritual purposes of the Poatina community by limiting population growth.

From a sociological point of view, the proposed Planning Policy of focussing on urbanising the future population and services of Tasmania would also diminish the very nature of what makes Tasmania the destination that it is, resulting in the extinction of many small communities.

On behalf of the Poatina Community  
And The Poatina Village Body Corporate

John West  
Chairperson