

## Tasmania's development environment

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The Tasmanian Development Authority (TDA) is working with other Government agencies to refine the approval process for major developments in Tasmania, including mining and ore-processing ventures. While considerable advances have been made in developing and articulating a suitable procedure, this achievement is untested because no major project has yet passed through the full process; to final approval or rejection.

Tasmania's potential in the mining and mineral-processing area is exciting and presents us with a planning challenge. The TDA is concerned to remove, as far as possible, the causes of community disquiet about the siting of major resource-processing industries. We are also anxious to avoid the possibility of future residential encroachment on to the fringes of major industry sites, a process that has been the cause of countless disputes around the world in the past decade. We believe the creation of specific zones for heavy industry, including buffer zones to separate industry from future residential development, is essential to good planning. To this end, we have worked with local government authorities to create heavy industry zones at both Bell Bay, northeast of Launceston, and Port Latta on the North West Coast.

Tasmania, more than any other Australian State, has been a testing ground in recent years for systems of reaching decisions on the approval or rejection of major projects. The venture that generated the most heated public debate was North Broken Hill's proposed Bleached Eucalypt Kraft Pulp Mill at Wesley Vale. Many lessons were learned from the Wesley Vale experience. However, in the context of future mining and ore-processing projects, Wesley Vale should be regarded as merely one of the steps in the evolution of approval processes in this State.

Other recent projects have also played an important role as test beds for particular elements of the emerging process. Significant contributions (in chronological order) have come from:

- The Pioneer/Pechiney silicon smelter at Electra in the mid-1980s;

- Renison Goldfields Consolidated's Mt Lyell mine continuation at Queenstown, a process that stretches back to early 1985;
- Aberfoyle's lead/zinc mine at Hellyer in 1986-87;
- NBH's Wesley Vale BEK pulp mill, from September 1987 to March 1989;
- Savage River Mines magnetite mine reconstruction in 1989-90;
- ANM's light-weight coated paper mill in 1989-90;
- APPM's proposed new northern Tasmanian pulp mill (December 1990 to the present);
- Shinwa Corporation's proposal last year for a tourism resort at St Albans Bay near Bridport.

Outcomes varied, but the three mining projects on the list, Mt Lyell, Savage River and Hellyer, all came to fruition and are still operating.

Through this evolutionary decade, the challenge for Government has been to design processes which achieve a reasonable balance between the sometimes competing requirements of a project proponent, on one side, and lobby groups, most notably the environmental movement, and local communities on the other side.

The Tasmanian process is designed to achieve this and to involve the Commonwealth in such a way that its approvals are accommodated within a unified process, the centrepiece of which is the parallel development and public scrutiny of an Environmental Impact Study and a Social, Economic and Community Impact Statement.

The requirements of proponents are met to a very large degree, and there are no major deficiencies from their perspective. At the same time, the legitimate needs of the community for input to and participation in the approval process are catered for fully.

The proponents of mining or ore-processing projects should have confidence in the adequacy of this painfully developed Tasmanian approach.