Natural Assets Code Fact Sheet

Purpose

The purpose of this fact sheet is to give an overview of how the Natural Assets Code (the Code) works in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

About the Code

The Code protects natural values and explains when and how development can occur. It also recognises the significant role that other State and Commonwealth legislation has in biodiversity conservation.

The Code gives the same statewide provisions for the assessment of development within:

- waterway and coastal protection areas
- future coastal refugia areas, and
- priority vegetation areas.

It also gives guidance for mapping overlays, with suitable flexibility to include local circumstances. The Code does not duplicate processes under other Acts. For example, the code exempts works in a certified forest practices plan under the *Forest Practices Act 1985*.
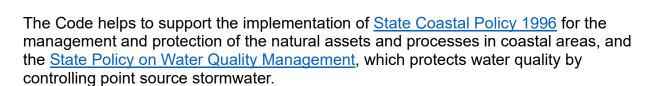
The areas

The waterway and coastal protection area applies to all land near watercourses and wetlands, including coastal areas.

The future coastal refugia area protects land on the landward side of coastal habitats which are at risk from predicted sea level rise. This gives room for ecological systems to shift and adapt over time.

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The Code helps to support the implementation of State Coastal Policy 1996 for the management and protection of the natural assets and processes in coastal areas, and the State Policy on Water Quality Management, which protects water quality by controlling point source stormwater.

The priority vegetation area protects:

- threatened native vegetation communities listed under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*
- threatened flora species
- significant habitat for threatened fauna species, and
- other locally important native vegetation.

This complements other State legislation such as the Nature Conservation Act 2002, Threatened Species Protection Act 1995 and the Forest Practices Act 1995. The priority vegetation areas are generally limited to non-urban zones to align with the purpose of the urban zones.

The three areas often overlap.

How are the Code overlays to be mapped?

Planning authorities were given guidance material to help them prepare code overlays. This included base maps for the waterway and coastal protection areas and future coastal refugia areas.

If a planning authority does not use an overlay, Table C7.3 of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme gives definitions and buffer widths for Class 1-4 watercourses and wetlands to explain where the waterway and coastal protection areas apply.

The priority vegetation area overlay was based on comprehensive mapping and modelling, using data such as:

- Department of Natural Resources and Environment's (NRE) TASVEG mapping for threatened native vegetation communities, and

- NRE's Natural Values Atlas for threatened flora and fauna species.

Many planning authorities have prepared alternate overlay mapping which:

- corrects any errors in DPIPWE's mapping and data, or
- gives more recent or detailed local assessment of the mapping and data, or
- identifies locally important native vegetation, including habitat for native fauna.

How does the Code differ to Interim Planning Schemes?

Interim planning schemes had different rules to manage natural assets. Mostly values were managed through the use of separate codes in interim planning schemes. However, some interim planning schemes had very few provisions for the protection of native vegetation. This meant there was limited consistency in how the interim schemes protected their values.

The Natural Assets Code in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme consolidates rules for the assessment of impacts on natural values in coastal areas, waterways and native vegetation into a single code. This means all councils apply the same set of rules.
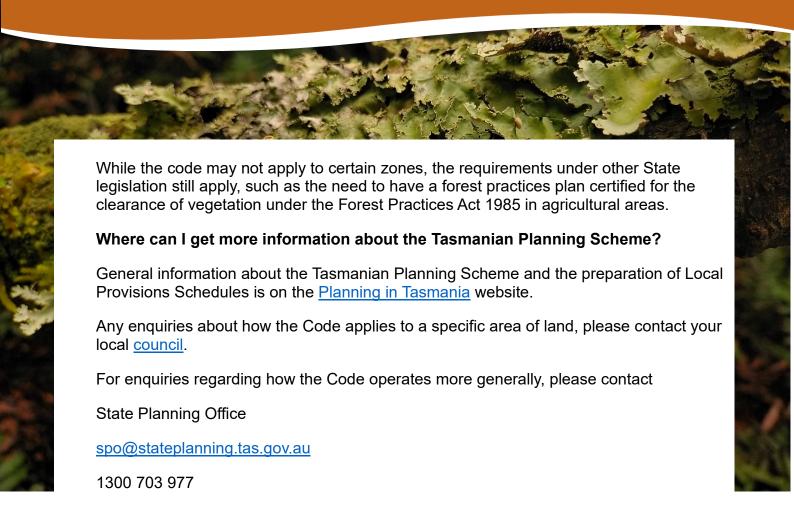
What zones does the Natural Assets Code apply in?

The rules for waterway and coastal protection areas and future coastal refugia areas apply to all zones. However, in the main urban zones, buffer distances are reduced for waterway and coastal protection areas and may not be applied areas that are very modified, such as piped waterways.

The code differs to most of the historic interim planning schemes by excluding the application of priority vegetation areas from certain zones, mainly urban development zones and the Agriculture Zone. Both quality agricultural land and urban capable land are limited and valuable resources that should be protected for their main purposes. Priority vegetation areas may be included in the General Residential Zone or Low Density Residential Zone. However, the code rules will only be applied to land subdivision.

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While the code may not apply to certain zones, the requirements under other State legislation still apply, such as the need to have a forest practices plan certified for the clearance of vegetation under the Forest Practices Act 1985 in agricultural areas.

Where can I get more information about the Tasmanian Planning Scheme?

General information about the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and the preparation of Local Provisions Schedules is on the Planning in Tasmania website.

Any enquiries about how the Code applies to a specific area of land, please contact your local council.

For enquiries regarding how the Code operates more generally, please contact

State Planning Office

spo@stateplanning.tas.gov.au

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