Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Paper regarding a new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act.

I make this submission at an officer level as elected members have not expressed an interest in collating a response at that level.

In general SMC are supportive of the move to formalise the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment process within the planning system.

This will be a vast improvement on the current practice where Aboriginal Heritage considerations for planning developments are essentially undertaken outside the formal system as a 'best practice' approach that depends on the willingness of Council employees and applicants to engage where legislation does not require it. This inevitably leads to overlooking of this important matter in some cases and confusion for owners/applicants who are trying to understand their obligations. There is clearly a better way.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage can and should be recognised and protected by the legislated system in the same way that colonial heritage is through the Historic Cultural Heritage Act. The expectations and processes should be absolutely clear and unambiguous for Councils, developers and so forth.

I also believe it is also important that research, documentation and communication about Aboriginal Heritage is undertaken not just in response to development pressure. Funding etc should be provided so that better information is available regarding locations/likely locations of Aboriginal Heritage and looking towards protecting highly sensitive/important sites eg by land transfers.

If I can provide any further information in regard to the above please let me know.

Kind regards

Jacqui Tyson
Senior Planning Officer
Southern Midlands Council

85 Main Street
KEMPTON Tas 7030
Email: jtyson@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au
Web: www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au

Web: www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au
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