



## **SUBMISSION FROM THE COALITION FOR PLANNING REFORM**

**14 October 2014**

**Dear Members of the Expert Panel on Planning Reform**

A coalition of organisations representing over 120 active community groups has formed to restore democracy to South Australia's planning system.

The CPR supports and endorses the submissions to the Expert Panel from two of its constituent member groups (Community Alliance SA and Conservation Council SA) and also wishes this submission to be considered by the Expert Panel.

Members of the Coalition for Planning Reform have lost faith in the planning system, and believe it needs fundamental reform, on the following grounds.

**The CPR has identified fundamental flaws in the current planning system:**

**1. Lack of real planning**

The current planning system and its policies lack integrated urban planning based on principles of sustainability, and instead seem geared towards an attempt to fast-track *ad hoc* development. The provisions for sustainability are inadequate and there is no long-term vision that prepares for climate change.

**2. Lack of genuine community engagement**

Consultation with the community occurs towards the end of the planning process, with few or no options given. Major decisions appear to have been already made and community views given at this stage are frequently ignored and appear to have little to no impact on the final outcome. Prime examples of the flawed processes and outcomes include the Mount Barker rezoning and changes to the significant tree legislation.

**3. Lack of transparent and accountable decision-making**

We believe the Government and the Planning Minister have excessive powers and the development lobby has significant and unfair influence on the government. The planning decision-making process is not transparent and there is little requirement for the Government and the Minister to account for their decisions.

#### 4. Lack of an effective system for larger-scale development outside of the normal processes

Currently the Planning Minister can declare a proposal as a major development without having to justify the need through an open and democratic process. Public input into these proposals is severely limited, and the assessment of environmental factors is often inadequate.

In addition, there are separate provisions for Crown and public infrastructure developments that allow the Planning Minister to bypass the 'normal' processes, and in some circumstances to also exclude public consultation and environmental assessment requirements. Such exemptions are anachronistic and have no place in a modern planning system.

#### **The CPR is calling for a new planning system to be established that:**

- a) Adequately addresses and integrates early on in the planning process critically important issues such as sustainability, climate change, transport planning, infrastructure provision, food and water security, environmental aspects, biodiversity, social aspects, sustainable design, employment, heritage, health and economic viability;
- b) Has genuine and meaningful community engagement throughout the planning decision-making process, with information readily accessible and easy to understand;
- c) Has transparent and accountable decision-making with a genuinely independent and open review process, which results in outcome-based and enforceable commitments;
- d) Provides a reformed process for the environmental assessment of development that currently falls outside of the normal processes (including major projects, and Crown and public infrastructure developments) that also meets the abovementioned standards (a, b and c).

In addition, CPR wishes to raise the question of administrative arrangements for planning matters, in particular whether such matters generally, or at least the processes for environmental assessment of major projects, Crown development and infrastructure projects, should be transferred from DPTI to the government department charged with environmental matters (currently DEWNR). We believe this may be a way of better ensuring integrated planning based on principles of sustainability, as recommended in (a), and also of ensuring the transparency and accountability recommended in (c) above.

#### **The CPR is also calling for MAJOR planning decisions to be deferred while the planning review process is underway**

In response to community unrest, the government has acknowledged the need for a review of the planning system and legislation, and has engaged the Expert Panel on Planning Reform to carry out this review. The CPR believes it is unacceptable that very significant planning decisions, based on flawed processes and policies and enacted by a system in need of review, are currently being made while the planning review process is underway. Prime examples are:

- The Urban Renewal Amendment Bill  
The Urban Renewal Amendment Bill currently before the parliament represents a major change to the planning laws and will significantly alter how planning and development

occur in designated areas. It could be used to minimise community input and maximise Government powers. The public has not been consulted about this Bill and the need for it has not come from an open and transparent review process.

- Major rezonings based on the 30 Year Plan

The 30 Year Plan is a significant document as the State Planning Strategy for Greater Adelaide. A rapid series of Development Plan Amendments (DPAs) is occurring based on the 30 Year Plan, to rezone large areas for urban development. The Plan and the DPAs lack real integrated and urban planning principles and are based on minimal public consultation processes, with most community views ignored.

We wish to emphasize that this call for a moratorium relates to MAJOR planning initiatives by the government that could have a significant impact on the current planning system and which, if implemented, will serve to undermine the objectives and usefulness of the review being conducted by your Panel.

From a community perspective, it is difficult to engage in the planning review in the extensive manner that is expected when it appears that the government is intent on pushing through a range of major planning initiatives before the State election next March. We believe the Expert Panel should itself indicate these concerns to the Planning Minister and the Premier and support the call by the CPU for a moratorium on major planning initiatives whilst your review is being undertaken.

Yours sincerely,

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