

Response to the WA Government Initiative to Modernise WA's Planning System – (Green Paper published May 2018).

Preface.

This paper is written to support the fundamental concepts in the Green Paper from an independent community viewpoint, by the writer having undertaken extensive consultation with many community groups and constructively with Local Authorities over several years; also undertaken an independent Functional Review of the existing Planning System in 2015.

The 5 key reforms are strongly supported from a Community perspective, but there is evidence of reluctance to boldly confront the broader future picture in reading through the detail of an 81 page draft that follows – and in the drafts of some other responses in limited circulation.

Having begun the process of Review, I urge the Government to be resolute enough to seriously pursue modernisation by comprehensive 'root and branch' system re-structuring and refuse to be side-tracked by established vested interests who have known no other system and fail to realise how unsuitable and irrelevant the current WA Planning System is for creating futures-orientated urban living conditions.

This contribution should be read as an enfolding overall review explaining the background analysis progressively, accumulating the reasons for a fundamental restructuring of the Development Planning System in WA. A new model for fundamental re-structuring is then outlined, with strong emphasis on the creative design-planning process. This could in due course prove most welcome to all participants including the development industry, Local Authorities - and the WA Community.

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This submission responds to the published Green Paper; the sub-text asks –

- *Tell us your experiences of the planning system;
- *Do you agree with the ideas and proposals in the Green Paper?;
- *Do you have other ideas for reforming the planning system?

Reaction to the Green Paper.- (agree/ disagree plus - other ideas for reform?)

The 8 page summary of the Planning Review Green Paper gives a brief overview of the key principles and proposals - a **“Strategically-led System”** **“Easy to access and understand.”** **“Well organised and efficient.”** also an intention to **“Open up the planning system and increase community engagement in planning.”**

In principle, all of these are warmly welcomed, (but the bulk of the 81 page draft reads with much less clarity and is clearly a ‘work in progress’ apparently struggling in places to ‘adjust’ long-standing elements of the existing system (rather than re-conceptualising the system overall); and consequently losing some focus on the principles espoused in the Summary.

Suggestions on Communicating the proposed new System functions and purposes.-

The 8 Page concept summary implies very different roles and functions for various sectors and agencies in the existing Planning System and since the achievement of it will require explanation to communities, could be greatly assisted from the outset by using new names for them.- e.g. Referring not to ‘Planning’ but Development Planning; not to the WA Planning Commission (WAPC) but ‘Development Planning Department , Infrastructure Commission, or other terms that more simply convey the role, function and status. Titles could also help to further clarify whether Groups are - advisory, authoritative, decision-making or operational on specified tasks.

Timely Context.-

This Review is notably parallel in time to another Government Review, namely of the WA Local Government Act. Since Local Authorities in WA have been the main urban Land-Use Planning interface with both the community and commercial developers and therefore hitherto a significant part of the WA Planning System, - their future role and functions regarding Development Planning must be analysed and re-assessed along with that of all other Agencies in the Planning System being reviewed in the Green Paper.

Coincidentally the writer previously undertook a lengthy independent Functional Review, but essentially from a community perspective; based on extensive observation and engagement with community groups and suburban Local Authorities. The conclusions of the

resultant paper also detailed suggestions regarding the future relative roles of State Government Agencies and of Local Governments in the Development Planning process.

The detailed information assembled during that Review has informed these further observations and suggestions made in this Submission. Plus the alternative System Model outlined later (pp 17 -19) in this Submission.

Local Authorities - in future with the System proposed in the Green Paper

Local Authorities will no doubt respond within their reasonable capability, but it has been clear for some time that most elected Councillors supported only by Statutory Planning staff and occasional external consultants, are not comfortable in combining a detailed community interrogative role with their community while recommending on Approvals in such a complex field as contemporary creative Development Planning.

Scope for different Interpretations-

There will be various interpretations of the implications for change and resource allocation that are certainly not resolved in the 81 page 'concepts' (plural) body of the Green discussion Paper; particularly interpretations by Local Authority Councils and their communities. Undoubtedly for some, a suspicion that Involving communities to the extent proposed will simply add to their responsibility while the existing central administration (WAPC/ DPLH) subjects itself to only minor adjustment. However, that could and should be a false assumption.

Preferred interpretation of the new Green Paper Concept.-

A (preferred) reading of the Concept Summary is that it will alter the role and require the assistance of Local Authorities primarily in interfacing differently with their ratepayer electorate. As implied in both models, the redefined foundation for Development Planning cannot be served by simply seeking and sampling superficial 'opinions' wishes and preferences from communities but requires much deeper investigation and analysis to discover the real current and on-going needs and preferred ways of living of different age-groups and how they will cope with change over time.

Elected Councillors in each L/A will therefore need to learn how to 'engage' far more closely with thousands across their area of responsibility and will certainly require the assistance of skilled Social Psychology professionals. That will be initially for guidance on applicable techniques, but also the continuing presence of such professionals out and about in the communities as they establish evolve, integrate, mature and change over time.

For a proposed revised system to be fully workable at the local level, elected Councillors should be freed from the duality of community representation and judgement on planning approvals if they are to properly 'engage with the community' in future local planning.

Returning to the principles espoused in Green Paper summary.-

‘Strategic Planning’ should of course be the founding genesis of land-use planning decision-making; and is generally recognised as a fundamental element of management of any business operation, whether privately or community owned and financed.

However, Strategic Planning must have clear Objectives.-

In the Public sector there are many tiers of management operating simultaneously with different roles and purposes, supposedly guided by **broad Strategic Objectives of the Elected Government.**

Changing Objectives?

In the case of land-use Development it has **not been at all clear to the wider community from the recent outcomes in the Perth and Peel Region what those strategic objectives were.** - Apart from seemingly to accommodate population growth; *(But ‘apparently’ to give commercial developers with very short term engagement, largely free rein to clear vast areas of land arbitrarily and subdivide that - to reap enormous private profits – and so inflate residential land block prices outrageously at the expense of incoming residents, with minimal or no attention to creating new long-term viable socially-balanced and integrated communities.)*

For instance, through poor overall management of land- use Planning in the Greater Perth Region, commercial developers have been allowed to ignore existing site assets and thoughtlessly destroy them by clear felling trees and bulldozing surface vegetation – only for new residents being obliged to reshape, reconstruct and replant the locality to recreate some natural living conditions.

Following Hon Premier McGowan’s recent remarks about opening up the system to be more understandable to all, the first requirement will be to explain what the new **Objectives** for Strategic land-use Development planning are to be; and hopefully how they are to be markedly different to what has gone before?

Therefore, provided that major structural changes are implemented to enhance socially relevant creativity in planning, the proposal in the Green Paper to “open up the planning system and increase community engagement in planning is, in principle, warmly welcomed.

Management of Land-use Development.

Since the Hon Premier himself is also the Minister for Public Sector Management we must presume that efficient and cost effective management is, or must be, applied throughout all of the public sector Departments and Agencies concerned in any way with Land use Development. That must logically include the internal structure and management of

WAPC , DPLH , Department of Environment and the Department of Local Government; and how they will work together.

Those Agencies have some authority drawn from Acts of Parliament. While those are very specific there are also definitions and descriptors used within them that are open to interpretation and those are constantly debated in Law. Those Acts provide Statutory intentions and context, but do not extend to defining the Tactical 'ways and means' that are the operating responsibility of all sectors of Executive Management that are each monitored by and accountable to a State Government Minister.

However, the 'Tactical' Executive Management Responsibilities of Agencies must extend to the whole of the operations, functions and outcomes embraced and directly affected by that Agency, even when some of the operations are delegated by agreement or contract to other organisations, public service or otherwise.

A problem then lies in creating 'policy' (and legislation) that is not tied by integrated linkages i.e. 'whole of government' integration but separated and loosely linked to individual operational frameworks that leaves 'others' to coordinate and attempt to link them; with variable standards and financial compromise, (or in the case of land use Development, unpredictable reference back to SAT or Ministerial jurisdiction having the final say). That is currently the case for Local Authorities.

Community view of various Agency Responsibilities-

These Responsibilities above are important from a Community perspective to be clear and unambiguous. Currently they are not. A most important Operational example is the case of Land-use Development is Responsibility for Managerial accountability as between the existing WAPC/ DPLH and Local Authorities.

From a community viewpoint that managerial responsibility currently does not appear to consistently extend in practise to managing the **interface between Local Authorities and commercial Developers.-**

Local Authorities have been 'somehow' obliged to manage this primary tactical interface with private commercial Developers (who themselves have only very short-term and partial involvement with land-use) through local development approvals. But the reality is that Local Authorities are primarily structured and funded by local ratepayers for very different – local Services delivery purposes.- e.g. Roads, Pathways, Drainage, Street Lighting, Refuse removal, Recreation, Parks and Gardens etc. ; and they are directly accountable for efficient management to the community via rolling 'Community Strategic Plans, monitored (by KPI returns) to the Department of Local Government.

Local Ratepayers reasonably then ask ‘why are they obliged to pay for an inflated development planning bureaucracy - that has observably not been contributing to future local social integration or creating genuine socially-relevant new community living frameworks?’

From a community perspective, In the case of future physical Development of land and creation of living spaces for human purposes in WA, the present Tactical system to supposedly manage land-use and create future living environments called ‘Planning’ is currently muddled, in part dysfunctional, substantially opaque to the community; and certainly not relevant to continuing major changes that influence their lives at home and work. That is clear evidence of managerial failure by the existing central Agencies (WAPC/DPLH)

Local realities.-

Local Authorities have been expected to be (in volume) the main operational decision-making agencies for land-use Development Planning Approvals; yet they are not adequately staffed for a creative design/futures planning role. Local Authorities each have multiple work teams and a small number of professional staff reporting to a CEO responsible to their local Community (Ratepayers) through their own locally elected lay Councils. However, for Planning their staff typically have ‘Statutory’ legalistic training interpreting the Planning Act and coded WAPC directives, but do not engage in local community research, sites assessment or give design advice, yet those are absolutely essential to delivery of creative future development outcomes for the community.

The rapid growth of population in the Perth Region and therefore the number of land-use Development proposals requiring approval has increased enormously. Also the quality of submissions from commercial Investor- Developers has fallen, - relative to the increasing complexity of required of outcomes, as rapid social and technological change affects community needs.

Many submissions are simply 2 dimensional diagrams showing land subdivisions into blocks that will be on-sold to intending house-holders or speculative builders. Thus offer absolutely no means to verify social relevance, configure or manage 3 dimensional outcomes (that are therefore not predictably determined). While Local Authorities have Building Construction Control expertise, that is in applying nationally agreed Building Codes of Practice, that doesn’t involve creative professional design expertise.

Local Authority services (paid- for directly by community Ratepayers) have been placed under enormous additional cost pressures by the WAPC/DPLH issuing copious directives regarding Development Approvals under the terms of the Planning Act (With WAPC/DPLH still retaining authority to reverse approvals issued by Local Authorities; also allowing Developers to appeal decisions to SAT or even bypass Local Authorities altogether to

independent DAP's). Yet Ratepayers bear the cost of their Councils losing Appeals by Developers.

That is viewed in communities as completely unreasonable –“**If Councils don't have appropriate expertise, then why not move the approval role elsewhere.**” Also a fact often overlooked is that **having a formal Approval role legally inhibits Councillors (in having to be both advocate and judge) giving their own personal opinion when exchanging views on submissions with community in open session i.e. technically prohibited. This severely restricts Councillor's current engagement with community and obviously must be changed.**

Impost of costly bureaucracy.-

Notwithstanding the 'escape' by WAPC/ DPLH currently from any exposure at all to the actual qualities and conditions of Sites in the Region, or to the detailed complexities of design that give rise to actual Development of land for future new communities; they **are** at present directly responsible by virtue of their existing chosen current managerial procedures for imposing costly complex bureaucracy upon Local Authorities, that should surely be managed and financially resourced by themselves, or by proponent Developers?

The Metropolitan Regional Scheme?

The WAPC/DoPLH have for instance created a massive desk-based 'synthetic' management bureaucracy that includes a **Metropolitan Regional Scheme (MRS)**

This Scheme is entirely theoretical and not qualified by any exposure to on-site survey conditions, or to design-practicalities involved with the creation of new communities; yet notwithstanding zero exposure, they presume to advise the Planning Minister who must make rulings, that are therefore often made in ignorance of local technicalities and implications.

This elaborate Metropolitan Regional Scheme (MRS) in the community view should be 'scrapped' as it has in retrospect done nothing to usefully manage and balance sprawling development growth and even resulted in an embarrassing reversal, to highlighting “INFIL.” (While generating massively wasteful bureaucracy through constant need for L/As to advertise and defend multiple 'Amendments' to cope with local realities- i.e. each alteration resulting from (still minimal) community engagement requires copious documentation and submissions to internal committees of WAPC/DPLH.

The enormous cost of that could all be avoided if the 'Approvals' Role of Local Authorities was returned to a fully restructured DPLH, based on detailed professional advice and input from specialised regional teams (that could be funded from resultant savings).

(Ref. as explained in the alternative model offered below. pages 17-26.)

WAPC/DPLH Policies currently detached managerially from means of delivery.-

If any attempts are made to retain procedural elements of the current system, In order for the cost-benefit of them to be openly demonstrated, the Community would need to know why the strange current arrangement exists where Tactical operational policies are totally detached from the machinery of delivery. – That naturally reinforces a public perception that WAPC/ DPLH are not properly managing the Land-use Development Planning system, contrary to a 'whole of Government' policy objective.

Remote philosophising and unproductive 'Red Tape'?

Other recent examples, in the community view, of massive wasteful bureaucracy are in creating the huge volume of expensive glossy publications such as 'Directions 31' and its sequel 'Beyond..' supposedly prescribing future land use scenarios, but largely wishful thinking not based on live on-ground, in-community research and usually operationally out of date, being constantly overtaken by rapid change in social impact of technological innovations, industrial economics; and variable population growth. (Yet commercial developers often quote from these to justify superficial proposals that are not in fact grounded on proper research, but obviously should be.)

Sadly even the euphemistically named Green 'Growth' Plan that was in reality a Green clearance Plan, was a remote theoretical desk-based-initiative.

When what was/is tactically needed is a Green CONSERVATION Plan ("Conservation" meaning not simple preservation), but careful selection and management - of locally unique (internationally recognised) biodiversity in the Regions to retain key permanently viable areas and assure inherent succession for the future, carefully thought-through to be balanced with locational demands for urban expansion).

Failure to achieve that in future will multiply community calls already being heard, for strict limits very soon to be set on the population of 'Greater Perth' and e.g. Bunbury and Geraldton etc. expanded to become metro centres connected by high-speed rail (at substantially increased infrastructure cost to the community!)

Accommodating Growth - while respecting unique biodiversity?

Sensible Land-use Development should in future be based on thorough investigation, understanding and more respect for the special characteristics of the Perth location. (The reality is that virtually no 'Green-field' areas remain and use of that term is misleading to commercial developers)

This Region physically comprises a flat mainly sandy coastal plain backed inland by a steeply rising heavily vegetated rocky escarpment. The sandy coastal plan extends northward into undulating country and southward into vast wetland areas draining both outfall from the escarpment and the coastal plain itself from some 20 km south of Perth City. (The northerly scarp natural drainage goes into the Swan River Estuary around which central Perth has

developed). The southerly drainage goes into the very large but extremely shallow and substantially land-locked Peel Harvey Estuary, with one narrow natural ocean link channel at Mandurah and an artificial one created at Dawesville; (a measure originally intended to halt 'eutrophication' of the Estuary (excess nutrients leading to accumulation of algae and depletion of oxygen in shallow waters).

The land surrounding this deceptively shallow Estuary is in reality a vast Wetland rich with rare wildlife, some of it is traditional breeding grounds for annual international water-bird migration in thousands; and subject to the RAMSAR conservation treaty to which Australia is a signatory.

Despite those known facts, drastic and irrecoverable damage has been inflicted on large areas of the surrounding wetlands by poor land-use Planning management in this estuarine Region , permitting commercial Developers to indiscriminately clear and cover swamp areas with imported fill over the past two decades, simply for highly profitable private short-term investment purposes. This is in spite of major public health risks due to continuing extensive mosquito infestation and increased pollution; furthermore now resulting in the return of substantial eutrophication; and destruction of benthic (water-bed) habitat through unwisely further encouraging recreational use for high speed deep-draught boats and proliferation of canals.

'State of Environment' Reporting should be obligatory for Local Authorities.-

Ref. the Government's current re-appraisal of the Green-Plan; the widespread destruction of internationally recognised local biodiversity by commercial Developers; and paucity of local site assessments. It is suggested that in future all Local Authorities be required as part of their Community Strategic Planning, to formally document regularly (with KPIs), a specific local 'State of Environment' Review.

Roles of State and Local Government Agencies – (in the Development planning process)-

The critical community views outlined above have arisen from the central (State Public Service employed) Agencies WAPC / DPLH currently having exclusive authority to advise on both Strategic objectives and determine development planning outcomes (but without appropriate professional expertise to properly comment). As noted above, this is through the complex standardised set of remotely conceived (desk-based) Statutory Planning Directives remote from any conceptual link with the needs of real people in communities, or recognition of the complexity of market economics driving commercial investment in land, viewed only as a commodity.

Those 'central' Agencies are viewed by the community as having 'too much power but not carrying enough responsibility' in not being exposed-to, or engaged at all with the

essential tactical practicalities of sites, social conditions, developer-induced cost inflation or quality of outcome delivery.

More Dynamic response urgently needed from the Development Planning System.-

These now very obvious weaknesses are being exposed more starkly due to rising pressures on the tactical design response to community needs, due the increasing complexity and rate of change through social and technological impacts on modern living conditions. (Very few of the subject elements affecting Land- use urban Planning for future communities remain constant any more, they are increasingly dynamic and changing rapidly; and that aspect requires very different managerial responses – often somewhat analogous to ‘hitting a moving target’.

Overall a clearly out-dated System unfit for future purpose.-

It must be admitted that in any fair assessment, despite extensive changes in socio-technological and economic circumstances; the overall Development Planning System in WA has itself been in operation with minimal change for several decades but (as outlined above) is now revealed as seriously outdated and unfit for future purpose.

Re-appraising the Role of Local Governments? -

Local Authorities typically (other than in perhaps a small number of inner metro City-areas) lack the relevant and essential professional skills and appropriate community engagement practices for e.g.- Detailed physical and environmental site evaluation; social research; design of contemporary and future living conditions – and most in fact do not regularly ‘engage’ extensively or interactively with their communities. (Note again: ‘Statutory Planning Officers’ have legal training for interpreting the existing Planning Act, but not appropriate skills to engage with community or in creative tactical aspects.

Local communities therefore typically have almost no confidence that their L/A can be trusted to be involved in the location and design of – comprehensive community hubs, future living environments, or make professional assessments as to whether proposals from commercial developers are suitably located and designed as comprehensively ‘fit for purpose.’ Most communities can point to specific negative outcomes, demonstrating for instance– deliberate lack of intergenerational age structure, absence of balanced community focus, poor or no creative ‘activity centre’ design, negligible open space and recreation provision and absence of the ingredients for creating local identity and sense of ‘belonging.’

More Red Tape?-

Nevertheless Local Authority Councillors and communities have been expected to comprehend ‘Statutory Planning’ Scheme procedures issued by WAPC that involve Local Authorities applying a set of broad or as they say ‘high level’ zoning rules with a list of

ambiguous 'use-class' definitions -that actually have no tested specific site evaluative or social context (those continually mislead citizens who read published 'Have your say' development plan application notices, as to exactly what is being proposed and why.)

The additional 'Local Planning Schemes' layer of Statutory determination creates/obliges further extremely wasteful bureaucratic overburden - to supposedly manage local development delivery. But still it does not, due to its extreme detachment from the tactical process itself (particularly for the outer suburban areas where a high overall proportion of Greater Perth urban population are or will live).

Typically every year, large numbers (hundreds) of such 'Amendments' to LPS are advertised by each L/A locally, yet there is still no assurance whatsoever that what they describe is physically, socially, environmentally or technically design-suitable as a contribution to the present and future local community context.

The evidence of this is clearly seen in most outer suburban localities of the Greater Perth Region that comprise vast areas of ad hoc random designed, uncoordinated, monotonous housing estates on tiny blocks with minimal open space; that will never by any stretch of imagination become viable integrated communities with an identifiable sense of place; but rather a breeding ground for social isolation and vulnerable disenchanting young people. (Further evidence of that is in current petty Crime statistics in many such areas).

(Note also that the continuing quest by commercial developers' for ever higher monetary returns, has shrunk lot-sizes to an extent that will be virtually impossible to retrospectively 'infill' in future or remedy the absence of recreational green space.

Overall Effect.-

Consequently the overall system is now obviously failing abysmally – to produce what should be creative, socially relevant and cost-effective development. Naturally the resultant gross uncontained sprawl has in turn induced costly **unplanned-for infrastructure and essential adjunct consumer social services.** (This has occurred in all directions from central Perth, not only north/south along the coastal plain.)

Planning System Review must therefore fully re-appraise the role of Local Authorities.-

Any enhancement of the current system must therefore address **constructively the current obviously unsatisfactory future role of Local Authorities.** Including why ratepayers should pay for what is a state-wide service outside of their direct benefit that only affects their L/A sporadically, and timed at the whim of commercial Developers who are not themselves competent to design or deliver new communities.

Developer Contribution?

Commercial Developers actually need and would value far more professional help with creative community design and would pay for that, within reason (bearing in mind that their

natural business model is profitability and very short-term investment.) They cannot and will not get that from Local Authorities as currently staffed, hence their frequently expressed frustrations, (and preference to apply direct to DAPs and sometimes recourse to SAT)

Development Assessment Panels.

However, regarding DAPs, despite the convenience and arbitration value to the current WAPC/DPLH, mainly due to lack of adequate internal professional expertise and external exposure, it must be recognised that they have largely an ‘end of tactical management’ evaluative/ judgemental role, being just as remote from the practical, specific site-related, local social context and local functional realities of creating new communities as the WAPC/DPLH currently are. (In a future re-structured system, their function could be accommodated differently and at less cost)

Infrastructure WA/ WAPC/ DPLH ?

Regarding Infrastructure, while the Government is creating **Infrastructure WA**, the community will question duplication and why this is not reconstructed from the former membership of WAPC when Development is the essential driver for all new Infrastructure (and WAPC already – had a membership comprising representatives of most infrastructure providing agencies in WA)? The relative roles and functions of IWA, WAPC and DPLH in the “Modernised” System must surely be clearly and cogently re-defined and explained if the avowed intention is to “Make the system easy to understand”. Indeed an outstanding challenge to the Review of doing just that may itself impose a most useful discipline.

Metronet.

Obviously the new Metronet rail network will greatly enhance rapid public transportation between major ‘Nodal points’ for development, but the design quality of development surrounding these Nodal points as major Community Hubs will be a crucial challenge yet to face – (and the existing Planning System is not likely to be helpful). Furthermore It would be very wise for the Government to notionally ‘ring-fence’ these major Nodal locations to avoid commercial developers creating more expensive-to-service ‘Ribbon Development’ sprawl between them and loss of potential natural recreational ‘Green Belt’ zones between them.

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A completely new model for Modernising WA’s Planning System is essential.-

Urbanising selected areas in WA for the future is far more complex than the present Planning System can possibly cope with. There are so many local vested interests that have evolved around the critically outdated System endeavouring to influence and control outcomes, that only a completely fresh approach to re-structuring has any chance of

reversing the mediocrity of outcomes and confusion of purpose that currently exists. Those vested interests are not only commercial, they are ingrained in the careers of many professionals who have worked only in the local System, that has distanced itself from the real clientele they are paid to serve.

Must re-focus on who Planning is really for?-

That clientele is the multi-cultural, multi-age community at large who have made WA their home. They characteristically reflect the enthusiasm and adaptability of voluntary newcomers, mixed with inventive and resilient qualities of pioneers whose early struggles to create a new life in a sparsely populated continent is still reflected in the more remote areas of the State.

The adventurous entrepreneurial spirit is strong and has created major new industries from mineral resources and attracted much financier attention from international consumers of those resources.

Recognising our regional history and realities.-

However, the urban industrial base is not yet broad or diverse and WA has in effect 'skipped' the powerful waves of urbanising populations and subsequent decay after industrial revolution of most overseas cities; also the devastation and subsequent reconstruction wrought by regional and world wars.

The concentrations of population in WA are still comparatively small and with a high proportion of employment in Service industries. The few urban concentrations now reflect the relative prosperity derived from the remote resource extraction for export, not from local manufacturing industries. Agriculture that in the 70s was responsible 46% of Australia's export income, has suffered from low investment and increased world-market competition, but seems likely to recover as the application of innovative farming techniques multiply and food production increasing in demand world-wide.

Perth is the only relatively large concentration of population in this State and the natural assets of its setting have been a powerful magnet for immigrants from both overseas and from other areas of Australia.

Development in the Perth Region with its relatively short and uncomplicated history of concentrated settlement has nevertheless suffered from the 'delusion' of ample land supply, largely blind to the uniqueness of its local biodiversity; and been allowed to sprawl unconscionably along the coastal plain with little or no attention to the consequences of costly extended infrastructure or, most importantly the continuing and increasing future need for cyclic renewal.

Now - is a timely call for significant change.

The State Government's current call for Planning System Review is therefore not only timely from the perspective of demonstrable past failure to cope wisely with recent growth, but vital also when the world-wide social impact of information technology is massively complicating the lives of the community clientele being planned-for.

Essential features of a new System.

A fresh model for an Urban Development Planning System in WA must therefore identify and respond innovatively to immediate current local realities, but also be capable of being much more highly responsive to the constantly changing needs of the community clientele.

Any future System will require a strong 'thread' of action-initiating multi professional team research running throughout the system, with multiple 'feedback loops' continually linking local conditions and needs of the community clientele with the Political machinery of Government.

The bureaucracy of legal oversight to ensure fairness and equity must also be substantially 'lightened' to adjust far more rapidly to changing needs of the community clientele; and be capable of not only tolerating, but also supporting innovation both at the level of Government-determined resourcing, and locally to respond to experimentation in urban Development sub-systems at both regional and local levels.

Central Agencies to be strategically focussed.

Government resourcing for Development should comprise two main streams at the centre.

1. For providing detailed forecasting and providing essential infrastructure State-wide and -
2. For comprehensively initiating, operating and efficiently managing a multi-layered, multi skilled professional design-planning system - to research, create and facilitate delivery of relevant future urban living environments, in close collaboration with local communities State-wide.

Both of those require their own research and administrative support and means to ensure positive on-going liaison with other relevant Agencies in the System, (in both public service and Local Authorities).

They are both needed to advise the relevant Minister/s on public policy and expenditure in those respective fields of expertise, but other delivery Agencies in the Development Planning System should also have a direct line of reporting to a Minister as required for formal public governance.

(It is vital to recognise that for future Development Planning, the Ministerial level of governance must have direct apolitical channels of communication with both community

clientele and central strategic system management, in order to comprehend and be able to respond to changing pressures through Parliament.)

Any new Strategically-led Development Planning System Model requires a continuous system-wide line of executive communication.

In order to meet the needs of the community for more creative innovation and continuing major social change, Development Planning for the future must be based on an integrated multi-professional team concept. An element of that must be embedded at high level in the central State Agency and a similar thread of the same with increasing live-application reaching out to creative local development problem-solving; and extending to all regions where urbanisation is increasing. This should be formally tied to a new form of interactive engagement with the clientele communities and commercial developers (noting that the business model of the latter is always short term.)

These continuous threads of interactive operational communication and action-research can be, if devised from first principles, a contemporary substitute for the massive and wasteful time-consuming bureaucratic overburden of crude Zoning and revolving Schemes that currently exists.- (The logic of which is barely comprehensible to the clientele community and in fact stifles both creativity of response and public dialogue generally.)

Networked R&D capability.

The central Agency responsible for Development Planning must have a pro-active information and research capability extending to action-research directly supporting operational elements of the System that are directly engaged in local Plan formation. This central Research and Development Unit must therefore have extensive networking capability not only within the State but externally overseas, to document and circulate successful innovation that might be seriously considered for local application.

While this Development Planning R&D Unit would be centrally resourced and located, its output should not only be available to the Regional planning teams but, also openly to the public in order to draw in and enliven community discussion on futures-experimentation for potential local application.

Availability of relevant professional skills

There is no doubt that the Universities in WA are delivering creative potential in higher education for various professionals who could be attracted to work in the field of Development Planning; but many of the brightest are disillusioned with limited opportunities in the current 'monolithic' public sector and obliged turn to private practice consultancies that may occasionally offer more challenge and opportunity to advance. This

is a shameful waste of capability and resulting in many leaving the State permanently- and ageing of the present small public sector employed professional workforce.

A fundamentally re-structured System could very quickly reverse this trend and drastically change the drain of talent to the private sector, that at present can rarely offer broad interactive professional team capability in continuing volume such as the model being described below could offer.

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A suggested alternative Planning System Reform concept.-

(This model outline below is informed by the detailed findings of an Independent community-based Functional Review of the land-use Planning System in WA with special attention to community and Local Government. First published in October 2015.)

A model for modernising and Re-structuring the Development and Planning system in Western Australia.-

The following proposal and suggestions are offered in an attempt to resolve some of the negative and retrograde features of the existing planning System as detailed above. Those may assist fresh thinking, to interface forward planning more appropriately with the rapidly changing social and technological community futures context - and in particular move the Perth Region closer to world-class in City development. That task, from where we are today in WA , is a daunting challenge and deserves very serious and urgent attention from everyone involved.-

In the immediate future context, Planning methodology will become increasingly vulnerable to rapidly evolving and unforeseeable trends and multi-faceted technology; and therefore need to be much less regimented, more flexible and tolerant of experimentation and able to accommodate new ideas on urban living. Increasing choice will be demanded and innovations from other parts of the world imported and need to be experimented-with locally.

Consequently the data and information required to keep the Region abreast, will be expanding rapidly and continuously. Applied research needs to be interactively spread much wider amongst all the professions involved locally in every aspect of future planning, and to remain relevant cannot afford to be frozen into directives applicable to any form of development, other than to safeguard basic community health and welfare.

PROPOSALS -

1. **State Infrastructure Planning Commission** *(note that the recent previous) WAPC had a 16 person membership, 11 of whom are Senior Executives of other*

State Government Agencies who are each responsible for delivering elements of infrastructure state-wide.

2. **Such a new Commission** would have a different but very specific State-wide Strategic economic research, population forecasting and general locational advisory role to the Government on all major infrastructure at the 'macro' level, primarily to enhance and achieve cross-sector collaborating coordination between Government Agencies that are planning and delivering specific infrastructure services.
3. This Commission with revised functions (and to include both the Senior Executives of the Dept of Environment and the EPA) would have its own supporting and Research Unit with re-defined 'whole of Government' links and be administratively separate from – a new 'Department of Urban Development and Community Planning.'
4. **A new Department of Urban Development and Community Planning** would become a central but separate administrative entity, include
 - (a) an urban design and development applied Research Unit.
 - (b) a Regional Planning Liaison, and Approvals recording Unit.
 - (c) a specialised Legal Team tasked to advise on operational fairness and equity across the system. (To initially coordinate re-writing of Planning Legislation.)
 - (d) a Development Planning operational Liaison Unit, with local Development Approval authority.
 - (e) a group of seven Regional Urban Planning teams engaged in the actual process of district and local sites research and concept design/ planning in continuing liaison with Local Authorities and commercial developers
5. **Local Authorities would cease to have approval authority except for single buildings or small complexes on single sites, but would have extensive new responsibility for local community research and engagement.**
6. **While** this functionally revised Department would have an overall strategic metro and regional planning framework development function, that would henceforth become a 'rolling' plan of less specifically detailed 'broad-brush' intentions; linked via an internal functional core Planning Liaison Unit coordinating a series of 'hands- on' professional multi-disciplinary Regional Planning Teams directly engaged in - actual creative district analyses, actual concept plan formation and design modelling.

The Legal Unit would advise, adjudicate in principle, and refer for arbitration competing development and conservation interests of all kinds; (replacing the current voluminous, over-complex, costly, slow and heavily bureaucratic chain of Regulations, related to the present Planning and Development Act, that wastefully involves the community in more of the same).

The Planning and Development Act itself and associated Regulations , with the cooperation of Parliament, would be simplified to facilitate the expected much more dynamic future for the land-use planning decision-making process, while retaining the essential principles of adjudicating as a last resort, fairness between competing or conflicting interests, in principle, on behalf of the community overall.

The Regional Planning Teams would be engaged, sites and district specific as required, with a detailed urban design evolution and a delivery role. Seven multi- disciplinary professional Teams would be continuously preparing detailed conceptualisations in Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) ‘precinct’ etc. form. Five of them for the Perth-Peel metro Region and two for outer Regions, supplemented as required for newer growing urban centres such as Bunbury, Geraldton and Karratha.

The range of professional skills required for these Teams would include –

- * visual urban design and spatial creative skills and experience;**
- * interactive social science evaluative capability;**
- * ecological site assessment and analysis capability;**
- * geological survey assessment capability;**
- * information (smart) systems engineering assessment capability.**

The extent of detailed district modelling would depend on local landholdings.- Commercial Developers would have an opportunity to use in full the modelling options developed by the Regional Teams or introduce their own design team – provided an equivalent newly DP-specified standard of CDA urban design was achievable.

The Regional Planning Teams would interface with Local Authorities directly through new appointments by Local Authorities of Local professional Social psychologist ‘Community Development liaison Officers’.

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Future Relevance of Local Government Administrative system to Development Planning?

As outlined earlier in this paper, currently the formal bureaucracy mismatch with the functions of creative professional futures planning, at a local level is completely inadequate for future purpose. Creative urban Planning is a highly complex process, not simply an administrative deployment of money to local services or even the application of received Statutory Instruments.

The process must involve detailed ‘live’ enquiry, assessment and interpretation of context - both physical on-site; social interaction with the community; and professionally skilled

foresight derived from recording trends and probabilities; visualisation of alternative projections on outcomes, and recommending on balance of options.

These functions are very different and indeed far too complex to fit with their other wide range of responsibilities. Many Councillors in reality have great difficulty in visualising outcomes from 2 dimensional plans as well as to engage helpfully with them (sometimes they will say they 'discuss the detail privately beforehand,' but this generally isn't borne out by what is usually demonstrated to the Community in formal Council meetings.)

(Reminder -Local Authorities typically at present don't do any actual creative developmental planning at all, so please consider where else at present that process can occur within the existing Planning System?.....

(The aforementioned Regional Planning Teams function could perhaps, by negotiated agreement be applied differently to some inner Perth metro L/As that may be better financially resourced from their rateable income and have comparable professional staffing teams).

The above suggested model requires L/As to very substantially enhance their interactive community engagement role, including the appointment of locally peripatetic professional social science staff; and excludes a Development approval role for them (except for small sites below one hectare, \$2 million value and single storey).

That model allows for a number of creative Regional multi-Professional Teams **sharing development design-planning assistance across several L/As** and with an Approving role linked directly to a re-structured Department of Planning (DP).

(NOTE: "employment of staff with higher order skills" in urban development is also endorsed in the most recent 2018 'Infrastructure Australia' Report.

One first step could be to, by exception, require a few Local Authorities granted permission to give Planning Approvals for larger projects to show evidence that they consistently employ an interacting creative in-house professional staff team (not external consultants with an unpredictable range of skill sets) -

- a) with visual urban design and spatial creative skills and experience;
- b) interactive social science evaluative capability;
- c) ecological site assessment and analysis capability;
- d) geological survey assessment capability;
- e) information systems engineering assessment capability.

Staged introduction and some combination of these concepts and substantial reduction of bureaucracy could achieve the necessary reforms without incurring net increased cost to the State Budget or to Local Authority Ratepayers.

Proposed New ‘Community Focussed’ strategic Objective.-

Since it has obviously proved futile -

(to continue attempting to create satisfactory new and modified environments for people or for communities as at present – i.e. by - Local Planning Scheme (LPS) Statutory directives, two dimensional zoning, printed guidelines or exemplar illustrations all requiring fresh advertising and ‘Amendment’ each time a substantial size Development proposal is submitted.)--

Urban land-use Development policies need a new and different Objective. That could usefully be conveyed as **‘COMMUNITY FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT’** and highlighting the principles of design that relate to human behaviour, comfort, practicality, functional efficiency, quality of living in an insecure smart ‘embedded’ systems technology-infused future and variable affordability. **That concept and the rationale for it is further developed in - pages 21-26 below .**

While the future for people is increasingly complex, the historically timeless instinct for collective sharing of resources – for community survival, protection, conversation and recreation, remains strong and should be reflected in - Development Planning being above all for people, henceforth in constantly changing circumstances that are affecting both community needs and values.

Consequently, the suggested engagement of ‘Higher order’ specialised multi-skilled professional design teams will bring community-focussed creativity to the fore and ensure not only far better quality outcomes for communities, but cut down Bureaucratic red tape and create more certainty for industry, employment growth; and for Local Authorities

For the future, those same ‘higher order’ creative professional Team skills are required for **all urban development at all levels of population density.**

(Unless the State Government shows clear leadership in Revising the Development Planning System creatively along those lines the Greater Perth Region will never achieve the potential that the location deserves.)

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(The following five pages are intended to be further explanatory of how the proposed Multi-professional Urban Design Teams will operate – mainly for readers who don’t have professional creative design background.) -

Design objectives in Development Planning.-

Designing Future Development Planning needs to have a (new) primary objective to focus on the drastically changing social context and on designing for the changing needs of real people, helping them to live with increasing resilience in enhanced community harmony;

(i.e. **Sustainability OF people** for the future as well as for them, that has been the popular drive in recent years.)

(To repeat again - the current level of relevant skills employed for this purpose within most Local Authorities in WA and the current weak chain of development-Planning decision-making management State-wide, are quite simply unfit for this future purpose.)-

Beginning the Creative Design process -

In outline only, the process of Designing urban settings for people begins with **functional analysis** – observing practical needs, what users do and how they do it and requires both **behavioural comprehension** and an appreciation of **psychological perception** – (how people view and relate to different surroundings) spaces – openness, enclosure, light, sound- vibrancy, peaceful quietness, relaxation and preferred priorities (varies by age and maturity). **Locational analysis** –choice/preferences - why, where and when. **Internal movement analysis** – how people will move and negotiate space locally. **External movement** -travel to and from residential localities – numbers, purposes; destinations; frequency; available time; available modes; and as single or group travel. **Recreational values** and preferences outdoor/indoor; convenience, affordability and limitations. **Social behavioural change**, foreseeable embedded smart systems trends likely to have conditioning effects upon social values, behaviour, or health.

All of the above and much more must then be related to the surveyed physical, biological and microclimatic qualities of the proposed site location – beginning by properly researching and evaluating the particular location, then working with whatever natural/ local conditions already exist and both enhancing and creating a ‘sense of place’ for new inhabitants.

Philosophical reflection recognising key facts of social evolution and future change.

Human instinct for many centuries of human civilisation, irrespective of cultural or ethnic origin – has been to come together in groups to -share, discuss, plan, survive, gain confidence and invent various means to live long and enjoy life. These ‘collectives’ grew from encampments into village settlements and multiplied, as shared ambitions developed for more than basic food sustenance and increased collaboration through creative enterprise grew to become infinitely more complex.

(That has been reflected historically world-wide and now evolving further at an ever-increasing rate. People today are being born into and now living in extremely complex mental environments that seem to offer higher standards of living, but threaten human values at all levels.- Even including the looming capability for the human race to totally self-destruct.)

Already people must cope with constant change – to home, work, personal time, family time; and simultaneously having to adjust to living almost ‘virtual’ lives- i.e. People of all

ages being instantly able to know about the whole complex world, but be challenged to actually relate themselves to what and who is real and immediate around them.

Also, continuing re-education is in many ways transcending traditional concepts of work, as 'intelligent' automation becomes ever more pervasive, sophisticated and mentally controlling.

In this future, already partly upon us, survival mentally and physically to retain healthy minds and bodies will require new forms of deliberately designed local physical living 'frameworks' for people; in purpose-designed community form, to support collaborative-activity and foster intergenerational sharing, companionship and sense of belonging.

In essence it seems logical that the human 'Village' concept can now be reinvented and planned to be re-created locally, but innovatively in a 'futures' context.

Since Designing (Planning) today for future living is for those dramatically different human contexts, designers must be creating new physical and social community contexts in building and spatial assemblies both indoors and outdoors, that can counterbalance relentlessly changing multiple destabilising forces, yet respond to basic human behaviours and instincts .

Design Planning Residential settings for people in the future must surely then have the PRIMARY OBJECTIVE of creating new and integrated – perhaps all-age communities that will preserve and enhance quality of life for people of all means and personal circumstances. Nevertheless retaining some choice of form, space, privacy, sensory experience and cost.

(Locally here and now however, that OBJECTIVE cannot be achieved without fundamentally changing the current structure and management framework of the Development Planning System in WA.)

The type and range of professional skills and means of deployment required is now different, with a much higher-order of perceptive and creative design input and utilising much more detailed analytical local assessment and insight.

Also the overall organisational 'modus operandi' must be changed with integrated multi-skilled professional analytical and creative design teams creating futures-relevant physical and social living contexts. This operating in parallel (but not necessarily co-locational) with on-going social psychology expertise (Community Development facilitation Officers) constantly engaging with local people, as neighbourhood design concepts are being developed.

Outcomes should increasingly be much more locally 'bespoke'-and with Community Development/ social psychologist support also arranged to continue forward to help build communities, post-completion of the physical 'frameworks.'

Conceptual variety then **must henceforth focus on users.** (Not left to vague chance by theoretical detached standardised Statutory Planning dogma as used by the WA Planning System as it is today).

Creative Design thinking – to produce efficient and liveable future communities.-

Designing and site planning for deliberate evolution of a community is very different to the current practice in many Perth Regions - which is of commercial investor-developers purchasing and subdividing land for ad hoc housing estates with neither themselves nor the responsible Local Authority having relevant multi-professional design skills.

Creating communities by design must give extensive consideration to multiple user needs and purposes.- A checklist in no priority order will include-

1. Futures – Sociability balancing life with on-line screen focussed personal isolation
2. Quality of life
3. Community spirit
4. Belonging somewhere
5. Conversation
6. Mutual support
7. Sharing life experience
8. Ageless collaboration
9. Growing together
10. Ageing together
11. Affordability
12. Sense of never being isolated
13. Sharing problems
14. Sharing physical abilities and coping with disabilities
15. Working together and shared workspace
16. Playing together exercise and sports
17. Learning together informally
18. Collective creativity
19. Having purpose in life
20. Supporting troubled minds
21. Supporting ambition
22. Income creation discovery
23. Learning new skills
24. Producing to share
25. Sustainable social living context for a cohesive future human community.
26. Meeting incidentally in public spaces
27. Making new friendship
28. Sharing interests
29. Cross-age intergenerational sharing of life experience and skills in upbringing of very young children
30. Having company to share creative and recreational activities
31. Collaborating in productive voluntary work
32. Understanding cultural differences
33. Supporting children and youth self-worth to feel they belong somewhere and respect their community.
34. Meeting other neighbours for a purpose
35. Forming interest groups
36. Creating new facilities
37. Seeking external support
38. Choice of privacy when needed for quiet sharing and contemplation.
39. Close to contact with living natural surroundings – light/shade/shelter/fresh air free from traffic noise .
40. Shared parks, shared productive gardens.

A multi-Professional urban Design Team would have all the above values and more in mind that will suggest facilities to be considered for inclusion against what is available in the immediate localities.

Detailed assessments of all assets of the site will progress in parallel– physical, geological, biological flora and fauna, landscape form, microclimate, natural drainage, proximity of available mains services infrastructure, easements, accessibility-minor and major roads, railways, existing footpaths and trails, walkability to shared services. Proximity-to or inclusion of convenience shopping facilities, child care, primary and secondary schools, all-age health clinics, accommodation profiles singles, couples, families, aged persons, care facilities. Public open space incorporating existing landscape features, recreation and sports facilities. Shared work space and shared open space. Community centres, vehicle parking - private and shared.

Compatible and less compatible uses listed and grouped. Depending on site features to be retained; ground-form contours and orientation, number of levels, relative height and various plot-ratios considered and trial-located. Relative elevation of access routes and spaces considered. Then the Team advance to producing alternative sketch layouts and 3D depictions of potential mass forms and spatial connections, with pedestrian circulation movement routes as a basic framework. All then tested interactively with available Local Community Reference Groups and-

In the case of the suggested change to Local Authority Roles as proposed earlier, the Professional social psychology input would be Local Authority based and employed. Those professional staff would be located in major local community activity areas, and be continuously engaged and interactive with local people; and so able to not only convey the sense of local collective and personal social issues and aspirations; but also produce regular reports for the L/A Councillors concerning social needs of all kinds but also discover and gauge opinions on future Development.

That interaction with Councillors and other Council personnel would be through regular ‘workshop’ meetings (open to the public) that would allow Council to **distil and provide balanced resume** of collective local facts and feelings on proposed new larger scale Land-use Development, to their **Regional Development Design Planning Team**.

Those Regional Development Design Planning Teams would, as above, be preparing alternative Design proposals interactively as and when Proponent Developers wish to commence the Design and Approval process. Furthermore the professional Social Science staff would continue an interactive community development role post- construction as new residents move in,

In this way there would be a very substantial level of assured Local Authority community engagement continuing forward into the future, well in advance of anything that could be

achieved by elected Councillors and L/A staff under the current Development Planning System.

Affordability caution.-

With the above OBJECTIVES in mind, the State Government should also now seriously Review the extent to which Development for mainly Residential purposes is currently driven 'fair and reasonably' by random private commercial investment for short-term profit.

That has apparently been **extremely inflationary on land prices in many suburban areas** and acted directly against personal community affordability. *(The community do observe that they unfairly pay in rates and taxes to operate the existing Planning System that seems to currently encourage or at least condone that practise.)*

Alternative land purchase arrangements should therefore be seriously examined, perhaps considering the feasibility of some 'land bank purchasing', with a combination of private and public investment.

To this end the re-constructed DP could also usefully employ Professional Land /Property Valuation staff available to operate with the Regional Design Teams as and when appropriate; and also available to investigate options to assist communities and commercial developers to contain affordability.

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