

20 July 2018

Planning Reform team  
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage  
Locked Bag 3001  
WEST PERTH, WA 6872

Dear Planning Reform team,

Modernising Western Australia's Planning System – Committee for Perth Submission

The Committee for Perth is an influential, member based organisation driven by Perth's business and community leaders. As an advocate for a brighter, more liveable future for Perth and Peel, the Committee promotes and enables change that will improve the cultural diversity, economic prosperity, sustainability and world-class amenity of Perth.

This submission has been prepared by the Committee for Perth with input from our Reshaping Working Group, a multi-disciplinary group that covers planning, design, development, construction, infrastructure, policy and local government.

The Committee supports the broader reform agenda that is being driven through the release of the Green Paper to modernise Western Australia's planning system. Our submission has been written and informed by our long-term advocacy agenda on government and planning reform. We believe that the current fragmented system of planning and governance in the Perth metropolitan region is hindering the potential to achieve our vision for Perth.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, and the McGowan Government on progressing this important initiative for Western Australia. Thanks is given to Mr Evan Jones for providing a briefing to the Reshaping Working Group and staff of the Committee for Perth.

Should you require any additional information or clarification on the Committee's submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

PP. 

Marion Fulker  
CEO

## Comments – Modernising Western Australia’s Planning System Green Paper

The Committee for Perth agrees with the intention of the Green Paper to ensure that the planning system has greater efficiency and effectiveness that can be understood by everyone in our community. Our 2012 report, *Towards a Bright Future – a vision for Perth as a region of 3.5 million people* was the culmination of four years of research and engagement with approximately 600 leaders from business, tertiary and local government sectors, along with stakeholders in government and the community to realise a bright future for Perth.

*Towards a Bright Future* outlined the Committee’s vision for governance across the metropolitan region: to have efficient and effective systems for local and regional governance. The Committee believes that the five key reform areas identified in the Green Paper are a critical step towards achieving this goal.

In addition, the Green Paper contains many proposals that will work towards fixing issues identified in FACTBase Bulletin 50 – *Examining 60 Years of Strategic Planning in Metropolitan Perth and Peel*. The research identified that the implementation of key government policies have had varying levels of success due to:

- inherent conflicts between core strategic objectives;
- community opposition;
- an increasingly fragmented governance framework at State and local levels; and
- conflict between strategic planning objectives and market preferences.

### **Key reform 1: A strategically-led system**

The Committee agrees that strategic planning is a critical first step in ensuring that future development contributes to positive growth of the metropolitan region. In FACTBase Bulletin 6 – *‘Successful’ Local and Metropolitan Government Models Elsewhere: Potential Lessons for Perth?*, the Committee identified the need for the creation of structures and processes that would allow Greater Perth to think and act more strategically in order to improve policy innovation and create greater leadership in political and administrative affairs.

Ensuring that the metropolitan region has a focus on strategic planning, rather than development applications being determined using outdated, inconsistent planning schemes is necessary in order to guarantee evidence-based decision-making. The Committee therefore supports review proposals 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.2.1, as they will create an overall strategic direction for the State which is aligned through all levels of government.

Giving the issue of housing distribution a higher priority than is currently the case is also supported by the Committee. Major finding 6 from *Get a Move On!* identified the need for targeted density in Perth and Peel, which creates better outcomes for mobility and residents. Review proposals 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 are key areas of reform to ensure density is increased in appropriate locations, and are therefore supported by the Committee.

### **Key reform 2: A legible planning system**

The Committee agrees that the current planning system is fragmented, with planning strategies at the State, regional and local level all expressing different goals and aspirations for the metropolitan region. In our yearlong major transport project, *Get a Move On!*, the Committee recommended that a whole of Government approach is needed. All strategic,

spatial and statutory plans in Perth and Peel must be consistent with the overarching regional land use, economic, environmental and transport strategies. This aligns with many of the review proposals under this key area of reform.

Historically, our fragmented planning system has resulted in only four of 13 major long-term land use and transport objectives being realised for Perth and Peel, as identified in *Get a Move On!* (Table 3a). This finding points to the critical nature of consolidating the WA planning system. Therefore, the Committee supports the need for a single, concise State Planning Framework and the proposal for a Comprehensive Local Planning Scheme that acts as a one-stop shop for all users of the planning system.

### **Key reform 3: A transparent planning system**

The Committee has long advocated for ensuring democratic decision-making through community representation and participation, as outlined in FACTBase Bulletin 6. In addition, research undertaken as part of the *What We Thought Would Kill Us* series highlights the benefits that early engagement with the community can have on both individual projects and wider strategic planning outcomes.

The *Towards a Bright Future* report identified that successful cities enable collaboration within government and through processes of community engagement. It called for a more comprehensive and formal structure for regional collaboration through the development of a 'whole of government' public policy and practice framework to guide informed public participation in the future planning of the Perth and Peel region.

The Green Paper proposal to develop a Community Engagement Charter is therefore supported by the Committee to ensure meaningful community engagement during the strategic planning process.

Review proposals 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.4.1 are a critical part of the planning reform agenda in order to ensure that decision-making is transparent and accountable. Ensuring the same level of understanding for reasons of planning decisions made by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC), the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH), the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA), Development Assessment Panels (DAP), local government and the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) is an essential step in democratic decision-making.

### **Key reform 4: An efficient planning system**

The Committee supports the Green Paper's objective to achieve an efficient and well organised planning system under key reform 4. Specifically, the WAPC's scope is wide and time is spent on both strategic and non-strategic planning matters. The Committee seeks a WAPC that is focused on planning matters that are strategic, significant or controversial. A refocus on purpose, reshaping agendas and increasing delegations are all ways in which the WAPC can be more effective and focused. This will be enhanced by the reduction in size of the WAPC Board with a focus on members who have a high level of expertise in strategic land use planning and decision-making.

The Committee therefore supports review proposal 4.1.3 and 4.1.4. Underpinning the success of this review proposal will be to conduct a review of the roles and responsibilities of both local government and DPLH. It is therefore essential to ensure that review proposals 4.1.2, and 4.1.6 through to 4.1.8 are carried out. This will ensure local governments are capable to carry out responsibilities under the additional delegation through an

accreditation process, and DPLH has the ability to recruit new and upskill existing staff to assist both State and local government.

### **Key reform 5: Planning for consolidated, connected and smart growth**

The Committee supports the proposal for the State Government to develop clear planning and delivery arrangements among the WAPC, MRA and local government in order to plan and deliver urban infill in key locations of activity centres, urban corridors and station precincts.

The prevailing outward low-density patterns of growth across the metropolitan region threatens our ability to remain economically competitive and places strain on the ability of infrastructure to service all residents within the metropolitan region. Research undertaken as part of the *Get a Move On!* report highlighted the inconsistencies in the delivery of public transport and infill housing projects, which has resulted in the distribution of employment and housing in locations which do not align with the overall strategic, long-term planning for the State.

A number of recommendations arising out of this report align with this key area of reform, including the need to plan for high-density living opportunities around key centres that are connected by public and active transport infrastructure; increasing population around major transport hubs; and provide for a way of purchasing land in fragmented ownership around major transport hubs to facilitate infill housing.

Proposal 5.2.1 is an important part of delivering on the State Government's commitment to METRONET, and are therefore supported by the Committee for Perth. Implementation of smart growth principles and practices through a new Consolidated and Connected Smart Growth State Planning Policy will provide for increased certainty on the delivery of METRONET and the associated land use requirements that will have the most positive impact on the metropolitan region.

In addition, the Committee supports the additional role of the Department of Transport in coordinating a whole of transport portfolio response to planning proposals along urban corridors, as per proposal 5.6.1. *Get a Move On!* identified the need for long-term, bi-partisan political commitment and cohesive planning for transport, land use and the economy. It also found that targeted density increases public transport commuting, yet in recent decades areas within Perth and Peel with higher than average population densities have become more dispersed (Major Finding 6, page 12).

The Committee therefore suggests that a review of functions is necessary between the numerous agencies and authorities who have interests over roads, as identified on page 69 of the Green Paper. This will provide a more efficient mechanism for coordinated and sustainable infill development in conjunction with the necessary transport solutions to support public and active transport. Ultimately, this will benefit the implementation of METRONET and provide Perth and Peel with an efficient and effective transport future.

### **References**

Committee for Perth, 2012, *Towards a Bright Future – a vision for Perth as a region of 3.5 million people*. Available from:  
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Committee for Perth, 2016, *Get a Move On! A landmark report to get Perth moving*. Available from <https://www.committeeforperth.com.au/assets/documents/CFP-Get-a-Move-On-Report-FINAL.pdf>

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