

13-3-2013

TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
LOCKED BAG 2 COLLINS STREET EAST MELBOURNE 8003

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

19 MAR 2013

SUBMISSION

SUBJECT: MAYOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

General comments :

A For the first time I commented on one of your reports in April 2006. It dealt with migration Impacts and population growth.

B Having followed federal governments complete disregard of your findings over the past seven years, I certainly changed my views about such investigations by whatever commissions, experts, thinktanks or authorities. I trust to have that clearly formulated on the enclosure (A).

C You have been around for decades and had a colorful history including namechanges and purposes from tariffprotection for our industries over an Industry assistance commission to Productivity Commission to focus on the former and our Economy. But occasionally you made some allowances for the public as well.

D Being mildly interested, I am confused. Every analyst, economist and lobbyist has bemoaned our lack of productivity for years. It must be all the Labor party's fault. You clearly have noted the demise of our manufacturing industry (by now employing less than 10% of our workforce, its index is under 50 and all on the decline). The reasons are manifold. Instead our leaders and industry have turned this nation's economy into a colonial one and nobody again spoke against that trend. We SHIP OUT the rawmaterials and others ADD VALUE (exactly as China does now in Africa). As an excuse the hon. Emerson tells me about a succesful SERVICE industry ? Well done-indeed. But remember, former ALP Senator Gareth Evans told another commission in the US on April 29,1991 that "they would turn Australia on its head".....

E A lot could be said also about your four main – Output – streams. Your quotation from an american economist (one of dozens competing for a hearing), Paul Krugman's philosophy is based on infinite growth. When is anybody noticing how flawed that concept is ?

But this is not the purpose of this study or of my comments.

Special comments :

A Why are you only now given this project ? Is it another pre-election gimmick ? In this context- has anyone ever performed a survey about the acceptance percentage of your work, by any government ? Another example is duplication in Canberra. It has been going on and increasing for decades and nobody calls this inefficient. How can there be excessive, overlapping regulations (red tape?). DEREGULATION has been embraced by Liberal and Labor since their acceptance of

Globalisation. The taxpayer even pays for deregulation bureaucracies at federal and state levels !

B Large projects like ports, coalloaders, coal mines in agricultural lands, mining in nationalparks or fracking again on quality farmlands or residential towers in CBDs have been carried out for years with little concern for residents, because most of them reside in suburbs of our major cities. In the case of our natural environment this is usually taken up or criticised by appropriate groups.

C I have no issues paper, but rely on a local newspaper report which I also enclosed (B).

D So called Assessment Panels have been around in the eastern states for years. We do not know whether they were successful at whatever level or simply caused more loss of confidence into matters of planning versus the common good and our elected representatives.

E As usual DAPs were introduced in WA much later to streamline planning and developing aspirations and the inevitable delays, as often as not caused by a hesitant public.

More so when the same residents noted the evergrowing population and the public services not being able to keep up. Housing shortages and subsequent price increases become the rule. This happens despite the fact that Australian housing prices are way too high. Houses are a poor investment, therefore they are artificially talked up by vested interests. For years we have observed ever increasing "catch up" attempts at every level of common service obligations (CSOs). State governments are unwilling to strive for a sustainable future. (C)

F This is where the developing industry, loaded with a poor reputation came in and causes an continuing increase of dissatisfaction amongst the local populace, goaded by the state planners. The idea as perceived by us after one year is simply another case of higher density living required from the top down. Hence the dislike of DAPs at the suburban level. They inevitably promote even the interstate investor looking for a handsome profit in a huge block of flats or a residential tower in suburbia. A common defense argument is that they should and will be desirable near good public transport centres, busstops, trams or rail, (sorry -- hubs as they are called now!).

G Only local government (councils) planners are sometimes ill at ease or worried about the complexity, costs, appropriateness, or too large projects in those processes. Those local planners are however at the bottom of the pile, just above the ratepayers/residents. No human being likes sudden, large changes in its environment, but that is how developments are regularly perceived. Visitors from the eastern states do not help those negative images either, since they mostly tell about outsiders riding roughshod about their communities. Occasional public fora are held to pay lip service to a so called "public participation process". They are only increasing our cynicism because more often than not "the goalposts were already set" by State government before the meeting opens. It speaks volumes to read that a Business Council of Australia sees a need to look into those WA DAPs.

H In essence the above concerns also apply to the contentious subject of council amalgamations. It is based on similar nonsensical claims about savings, streamlining, efficiencies and better representations in larger local councils in the eastern states. These claims are not being born out by every visit to the east or the tales of their hoodwinked residents when visiting WA.

I As can be noted in the enclosed articles we now face the same discontent as happens in Victoria, NSW or Queensland. Nobody should be surprised if vox populi sees this merely as another attempt to further disenfranchise the population by the two major parties. The old WA Inc., \$ 25 000 for a ticket to dine on the table of a Premier, the federal parliamentary speaker affair or current NSW mining scandals are the proof of such claims. Those elected parliamentarians are just bit players in a gigantic charade.

O.M.

2 enclosures



DAPs undemocratic

JANET WOOLLARD says the Barnett government's development assessment panels are an attack on democracy.

Liberal rival Dean Nalder says they streamline approvals.

Fed up with different rules for different councils and pesky locals who insist on having a say in how their community looks, the Barnett government introduced DAPs to make it easier for developers to get big projects approved. The panels were first mooted by former Labor planning minister Alannah MacTiernan, now mayor of Vincent.

With three government-appointed members and just two local councillors sitting on each panel, the democratically-elected members are always outnumbered.

Developments valued at more than \$7 million go straight to the DAPs for a decision, completely bypassing the elected council. A developer gets to choose who to go to for any project valued between \$3m and \$7m.

Dr Woollard says DAPs

cut the community out of the process. "Setting up these development assessment panels means that the community misses out on the planning decisions that affect the local area," she says.

"Before, members of the community could lobby their local councillors and have some input into what developments were going to happen.

"The community are very unhappy that they're not involved." *Liberal*

Mr Nalder says as a new candidate he's still getting across the approval processes.

"In regards to... whether it's taking away democratic rights, I'm not sure. There are still councillors who are a part of that process," he says.

He says, "it's important that the community voice is heard" but understands it can be difficult for developers when different councils have different rules. "We're trying to find the balance here where things can happen and not be blocked unnecessarily, and at the same time where there's legitimate concerns those things can be raised."

Cr Mark Reynolds is one of two Melville councillors sitting on the local DAP.

He says he can't speak for council, but in his personal view he's "reasonably happy with the DAPs".

He says there have been disagreements between councillors and appointed members "on minor elements", but adds when it comes to "the overall picture of whether something goes ahead or not, I haven't seen a real disparity in views at this point of time".

Cr Reynolds says on the plus side, the DAPs drill down straight to planning issues. On the downside the "human element" can be missing from decisions made purely on planning grounds, but he thinks this will be worked out over time.

The DAPs have been more contentious in the western suburbs, where one Subiaco resident is taking them to the supreme court over a decision.

DAPs had their genesis in NSW under that state's former Labor government, following intense lobbying by the powerful developer lobby.

tion of councils by Mr Barnett was a means to ensure local objections would be overcome and development progressed more easily.

I make no comment on the building or its suitability for the particular site.

The issue is simply the process, or lack of, by which the development was passed in the first place.

In NSW, the imposition of planning panels by the now discredited former Labor government ensured local communities and councillors were entirely locked out of the planning process.

WA, under a conservative government, seems determined to

Subi snubs \$20m Roydhouse block

By LLOYD GORMAN

Subiaco councillors don't like plans for a \$20 million, six-storey building in Roydhouse Street.

It would have up to 94 apartments, office space and 123 parking bays.

Roydhouse Street-based architect David Hillam said the development at 15 to 17 Roydhouse Street was designed to bring more people into Subiaco.

"The redevelopment of lots 8 and 9 Roydhouse Street continues the transformation of the former light industrial lots located in Hood Street precinct," he told councillors at the development services committee meeting.

"The fact that the development sites in this precinct have remained unsold for a long time is an indication that redevelopment can be marginal."

"This undoubtedly requires that the full extent of allowable development be pursued."

Mr Hillam, who has designed developments in Subiaco, said the building "fits very closely" with the bulk and scale requirements of the Hood Street precinct.

He said the building exceeded the plot ratio by less than half of 1% and would need a variation in height limits of between 500mm and 1.5m.

The rear of the development would be set back, he said.

Mr Hillam said the council report highlighted areas where

further changes would be made to the plans.

"I believe the report recognises the design is close to meeting acceptable standards and we are keen to make adjustments to reflect this," he said.

"Discussions with the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority indicate that some variation to setback and privacy requirements, particularly to the rear, will need to be worked through."

Councillor Stephanie Stroud said the Hood Street precinct was originally intended to have a three-storey height limit.

"Then in 2011, the MRA changed it to five-storey developments, which is pretty appropriate to its location, a transit-oriented development near the train station."

"The MRA has approved five-storey in the precinct and nothing has been built but we already have a six-storey proposal."

Councillor Garry Trinder mentioned Catherine Street and said the council had commented that if the development application for the office block at that location had come to it for approval it would not have got up.

"We need to do something similar here," Mr Trinder said.

The committee voted 12:1.

Subiaco council had until mid February to make its recommendation about the development to the MRA, the planning authority for that location.

Wedge owner's attitude clear

Reference is made to the report, "Wedge politics" (POST, February 16), which referred to my visit to the Subiaco development site nicknamed "the Wedge".

The report told of a chance encounter there between Independent candidate Max Hipkins, Max's campaign manager Linda Rogers, a man who identified himself as the owner of the site, and me.

After a screening of my documentary, State of Siege, the following Saturday, I related to the audience the general

thrust of the conversation that had taken place at the site with the owner.

In the POST report, there is a suggestion by the owner of the site that elements of my retelling of the conversation that afternoon had been made up.

I am not in the habit of making things up and recall very well the owner's response when he was reminded there had been several objections to the building.

Premier Colin Barnett was mentioned by the owner, in terms that made it clear that, in his view, the forced amalgama-

Leave councils alone and form a regional body

The Metropolitan Local Government (Robson) Review panel, set up by the Barnett government to look at council reform, including possible amalgamations, recommended abolishing all 30 metropolitan councils to be replaced by 12.

The government will consider the recommendation after the election, depriving the electorate of any opportunity to give the government a mandate.

The Robson report identified two main problems in relations between the government and metropolitan councils: waste disposal and strategic planning.

Waste disposal (not collection) is largely the responsibility of the five metropolitan regional councils established for that purpose.

Amalgamation/abolition will have no impact on this problem.

One 15-member metropolitan regional council could be effective in establishing, with the government, sustainable waste disposal for the metropolitan area.

Metropolitan strategic planning (not large local projects like the Scarborough and Cottesloe beachfronts) includes the light-rail project, the Eastern Gateway, the Stirling Highway study, and urban infill.

These issues could be handled by the single regional council

with the state Transport and Planning departments.

This single metropolitan regional council, with compulsory membership of local councils and statutory powers, could be formed with limited disruption and minimal cost.

If anyone identifies council boundaries they think should be changed for specified benefit, this can be done at any time through existing procedures.

If anyone identifies actual benefits of economy of scale in the operation of small councils, this can be by voluntary co-operation between councils (the existing regional councils, shared depots Nedlands/Claremont and co-operation between western suburbs libraries are visible current examples of this).

After so much divisive and unproductive argument and threats, where residents are offered a "choice" between the unacceptable and the catastrophic, it is time the government and councils considered effective means to resolve problems.

A metropolitan regional council seems the most cost-effective option to satisfy the government's requirements while leaving councils to continue to do their work to the satisfaction of their residents.

Bruce Haynes
Shenton Road, Claremont

A

I quote from your April 2006 report AND NOTE that the current government takes NO NOTE of e.g. that report by supporting unhesitatingly an exploding population.

The Commission's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by consideration for the well being of the community as a whole!

Is WA heading towards a state of siege?

Independent candidates Max Hipkins (Nedlands) and Kevin Morgan (Cottesloe) last weekend hosted free community screenings of the documentary, State of Siege.

This exposes the corruption underpinning the undemocratic planning system and the consequent destruction of NSW neighbourhoods, towns and villages for the benefit of the government's developer cronies, as a result of planning laws, similar to those that have recently been introduced in WA by the Barnett government.

The WA laws allow the planning minister to override the wishes of local communities and impose zoning and local planning scheme changes.

That gives developers free rein to put up multi-storey buildings in previously low-rise neighbourhoods and potentially destroy the property values, amenity and way of life of nearby residents and owners.

As if those laws are not draconian enough, the unrepresentative development assessment

panels (DAPs), that assess development applications for big developments, can hold secret meetings with the developer to negotiate approval conditions.

The secret meeting process lacks balance because alternative points of view cannot be made known by neighbours, local councils or affected communities, and misinformation from developers cannot be corrected or made known to the DAP.

It is corruptible because it is secret.

The public has no idea when these secret meetings are held

and no entitlement to attend.

Those affected by DAP decisions have no right to speak at a DAP meeting, or to appeal a DAP decision, while developers may appeal.

If you want to see the possible future for WA under the Barnett government's planning regime, and the destruction and disenfranchisement that will follow if the NSW experience applies, then I urge you to watch State of Siege screening on WTV, Channel 44 this Saturday, February 16, at 9pm.

Lyn Jennings
Salvado Road, Floreat

Red tape under federal scrutiny

By LLOYD GORMAN

B

The federal government is looking at ways to streamline development assessment processes, cut costs and red tape and make it easier for major projects and big developments to get approved.

As part of a 12-month study, the Productivity Commission has been asked to look at how projects are assessed in Canada and other countries.

WA's development assessment panels (DAPs) will be included in the national study, which is the result of a pitch by the Business Council of Australia (BCA) to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

According to the commission, the cost of new engineering construction makes up a quarter of all investment in Australia and is a major employer.

"Major projects can impose costs on others in the community, such as damage to the environ-

ment, reductions in community amenity and demands on existing (and for new) infrastructure," the commission said.

It said excessive, overlapping and poorly administered regulations could impose unnecessary burdens on businesses and consumers.

In Perth CBD, projects automatically become DAP applications if they are worth \$15 million or more, while across the rest of the state the cut-off is \$7 million.

For projects between \$3 million and \$7 million, developers can choose to have their developments assessed by a DAP rather than by local councils.

The study will look at the appropriate role of local government.

Public comments on the study - which can be made at www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/major-projects - close on March 25.

The commission will make its final report to the federal government in December.

\$5m PR boost for MRA

A West Perth firm has been given nearly \$5 million to spruik the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA).

Delhi Street-based Rare Creative Thinking was given the advertising contract, worth \$4,995,000, to promote, market, propagate, advertise and publicise the MRA and its various projects - including Elizabeth Quay and a new stadium at Burswood.

The contract runs out on January 31, 2015.

\$5 Million for advertising!!!

There is an alternative to runaway population

C

Kelvin Thomson's 14-point plan for population reform (Melbourne, 11 November 2009)

Tonight I am releasing for discussion a 14-point plan for population reform.

The first 11 points go to how we can stabilise Australia's population.

1. Stabilise Australia's population at 26 million by cutting the net overseas migration program to 70,000 per annum.
2. Cut the skilled migration program to 25,000 per annum.
3. Hold the family reunion program at 50,000 per annum.
4. Increase the refugee program from 13,750 to 20,000 per annum.
5. Alter the refugee criteria to include provision for genuine climate refugees.
6. The revised number of annual permanent arrivals from these programs would be 95,000—50,000 family

Does anyone amongst your departmental staff remember the following :

1) Geography Prof. G. Taylor from Sydney University in 1920 about this big country's aridity and limitations? 2) Barry Jones's enquiry into our "Carrying capacity", 1994 ? 3) CSIRO's B. Foran and F. Poldy's "Future Dilemmas" in 2002? 4) the Productivity Commission's Research report April 2006 ?, "Economic impacts of Migration and Population growth"? and 5) CEDA's "A greater Australia", March 2012 ? All forgotten and dumped to please the UN, GATS, globalisation and the covert loss of sovereignty and decisionmaking in the National Interest.

reunion plus 25,000 skilled plus 20,000 refugees. Two more factors need to be considered: the number of people departing permanently from Australia, and the number of people arriving permanently from New Zealand. To reach a net overseas annual migration target of 70,000, the number of automatic places available for New Zealanders needs to be restricted to the number of departures from Australia over and above 25,000. The Trans Tasman Travel Arrangement would be renegotiated to achieve this, splitting available places for New Zealanders equally between skilled migrants and family reunion, and allowing New Zealanders to also apply and compete with other applicants under these normal migration programs.

7. Reduce temporary migration to Australia by restricting sub-class 457 temporary entry visas to medical and health-related and professional engineering occupations.
8. Require overseas students to return to their country of origin and complete a two-year cooling off period before being eligible to apply for permanent residence.
9. Abolish the Baby Bonus.
10. Restrict Large Family Supplement and Family Tax Benefit A for third and subsequent children to those presently receiving them.
11. Dedicate the savings from abolishing the Baby Bonus and reduced expenditure on Family Payments for third and subsequent children towards increased investment in domestic skills and training through universities and TAFE's.

The final three points go to how we can play a role in helping stabilise global population.

12. Increase Australia's aid to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income with money saved by abolishing Fringe Benefits Tax concession for company cars, and greater use of off-the-shelf purchases in defence equipment purchases.
13. Use more of Australia's aid budget for educating girls and women, and for better access to family planning and maternal child health, and advocate in the United Nations and international fora for other countries to do likewise.
14. Put overpopulation on the agenda for the Copenhagen Climate Change talks.

How have I arrived at this plan?

Stabilise the world's population

I have set out the reasons why I believe the world's projected population levels are too high and unsustainable—global warming, food crisis, water shortages, housing affordability, overcrowded cities, transport congestion, fisheries collapse, species extinctions, increasing prices, waste, war and terrorism—in detail in a speech to Parliament on 17 August.¹ If we are going to achieve this outcome everyone has a role to play.

Every country has both the right and the duty to stabilise its own population at a level compatible with its own resources and environment. In equity terms, this is an

approach for each country to pull its own weight AND stabilise their OWN numbers
We should not be asked to accept their
FAILURES.