

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF RESIDENTS AND
RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATIONS INC
P.O. BOX 520
TORRENSVILLE PLAZA SA 5031**

31st August 2010

**SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ISSUES PAPER, MAY,
2010: Performance Benchmarking of Australian Business Regulation:
*Planning, Zoning and Development Assessments.***

**Submission: “South Australian Federation of Residents and Ratepayers
Associations Inc”.**

Attention Christine Underwood
Regulation Benchmarking Study:
Planning, Zoning and Development Assessments Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City
ACT 2601

Dear Sir / Madam,

Submission on enquiry into planning, zoning and development assessment

Our Association makes the following points in response to the terms of reference questions posed in the discussion paper.

- *“On what matters should the planning, zoning and DA related decisions and actions of governments be coordinated? How should performance on these matters be benchmarked? Are there particular examples of where land development and development of other urban infrastructure (such as transport and schools) are or are not well coordinated? What costs (benefits) does poor (good) coordination between levels of government create for:-*
 - *property developers*
 - *businesses, aside from property developers*
 - *government agencies and local governments*
 - *residents?” (Issues page 14)*

In Adelaide’s suburban / metropolitan established areas have been forced to suffer increased urban infill housing overdevelopment’s causing major parking congestion not only for the owners but many family and friends who are visiting these areas. Little or no off street parking seems currently made available for residents and ratepayers. Individuals are parking over driveways, neighbourhoods’ disputes have become ugly with the continual verbal and physical violence occurring forcing some residents to move out of the area. Residents deciding to move further away for there own wellbeing and peace of mind.

South Australia’s developer friendly planning rules are in most cases against the wishes of residents and ratepayers. Why do residents / groups submit submissions when nothing is taken into account only the government’s own plans? We believe that many residents / community groups would like to see better sustainable planning. Today’s parking planning rules must change to allow at least two off street parking spaces per dwelling and one additional parking space for each dwelling having more than two bedrooms.

Why is the general public being forced to adopt overcrowding by our governments where the growth / overcrowding escalation in the mental health costs, violence, police intervention, ambulances' services intervention and social agencies intervention. The drug and alcohol issues multiplied and this is why many new residents have come to South Australia / Australia to escape these issues at home, hoping to enjoy greater open spaces and less vehicle congestion. Not have the same situation in their home country here. Why is Australia copying the rest of the world?

Overdevelopment with little parking particularly for the elderly and disable will find it more difficult to maneuver their vehicle even in the designated car park. Urban infill promoted particularly in Adelaide's own flood prone areas. Why? Stormwater is not collected but instead is wasted when flowing out to sea into the Gulf St Vincent, at Henley Beach, South Australia. With little or no infrastructure in the western suburbs council areas which are flood prone even when light rainfall falls' these areas whether in suburban streets or roads are flooded. These flood areas have been in the same position for the past fifty years and the Local Government responsible for the area has never fixed these problems, no funding allocated to improve these areas. Flooding issues have not happened overnight from climate change or global warming. Why are we waiting?

As more and more developers are given the green light by government, not by the residents and ratepayers for increased urban infill and more of Adelaide suburbs suffer the ever increasing congestion on the roads and streets. Older homes on large blocks, detached houses all with gardens are demolished at an alarming rate to be replaced with two or three units; streets are becoming more heavily congested and are used for car parking. The addition of more driveways from urban infill to accommodate more dwellings is also removing resident's car parking spaces available in their streets. When people live in medium / high density housing they would make use of nearby public transport, our government's perception which is not correct. Residents end up using their own car to travel to areas of choice, i.e. work, child care, schools, shops either not serviced by public transport or travel times are at the most inconvenient times.

Good planning rules should ensure every dwelling provide two off-street onsite parking spaces, with one additional car parking space for each additional two bedrooms or part thereof -

- dwelling with 3 bedrooms requires 3 on site car parking spaces.
- dwelling with 4 bedrooms requires 3 on site car parking spaces.
- dwelling with 5 bedrooms requires 4 on site car parking spaces.

The above planning rules were once the norm in our South Australian suburban councils Development Plans, but over time have changed to less parking requirements by the government. We believe increasing population growth; will lower that style of a better quality of life that once existed in many family orientated medium to high quality suburbs.

Many perceived poorer suburbs particular in the western suburbs with housing maintenance is in arrears, the aging population at the time can't afford infrastructure around their homes. Some developers will take advantage of these areas for further urban consolidation with single and high rise developments. Many of these new developments are under "strata title" resulting in high costs to maintain properties – extra maintenance fees, strata fees, apart from the resident paying the mortgage. The loss of the traditional back yards, less green space, grown trees are removed, fruit trees lost to concrete and the trend for larger housing built on the whole site increasing more storm water run-off. Currently we have poor or a lack of recycling of storm water run off in South Australia. **2.**

The obsession in South Australia for a large population at all costs and no infrastructure in place for water, open space parks, schools, hospitals, community development activity area especially for the youth is beyond belief. We believe high density housing overcrowding will create major social problems, increased mental health issues in the population, not only today but for decades /generations to come.

Ratepayers who have bought houses in good faith a number of years ago in low-density fully developed suburbs have a right, natural justice to expect that the current and future planning process is administered well by their local elected Councillors. South Australians State Government Parliament legislation must provide the security for future housing re-development in their streets, respect the existing character and established pattern of development in their streets. Today, unfortunately this is not the case with many residents overnight are seeing demolitions of character homes close by and the replacing with new mass-unit, multi-storey infill developments. These developments are being crammed on to nearby allotments of land reducing the character and amenity of their homes and suburbs which they have bought into.

Many examples of this are in areas very close to Adelaide's CBD and the surrounding areas, much of this is in the western suburbs. The Productivity Commission should be aware that residents do not enjoy more cars driving down their suburban streets every day, more cars parked in their street and in some cases restricting their own parking. More people are crowding on to an already unable to cope peak public transport system (buses, trams, trains), during daily commuting.

Adelaide in particular in the last two years has seen longer travel times to and from the city. Traffic's slow travelling to and from work, schools, sporting activities and normal travelling is reducing "family-time", after residents arrives home exhausted from the stop-start, congested journey. This is even prevalent in areas of the Adelaide Hills, an hour / hour and a half drive time each way whereby the weekend's residents are too exhausted and many residents instead of enjoying outside activities stay indoors resting. Bush fire prevention suffers as well.

4. *"To what extent does influence by interested parties, particularly those who may be politically active within the community, affect the decision-making processes? Does this improve or worsen outcomes? In what way? Do the views of these parties typically reflect the broader community sentiment?" (Issues page 18)*

SAFRRA believes that many developer lobby groups (Property Council) in South Australia are allowed too much influence over the government, the politicians and the media. Brainwashing the community, day in, day out and telling us what we want to see developed. South Australia's Residential Development Code introduced to parliament recently has the legislation now in place for faster development approvals, less controls or time to make these developments sustainable for the better in the local community.

The above RDC simplification of planning decisions by a simple tick-a-box check-list for new developments and does not take into account our heritage, the important character homes and good amenity regarding good planning decisions. Most suburbs older and new will become awful, unpleasant tacky areas for the residents and ratepayers under our new tick-a-box housing / planning gets the good ahead in the coming foreseeable future.

4. *“To what extent does influence by interested parties, particularly those who may be politically active within the community, affect the decision-making processes? Does this improve or worsen outcomes? In what way? Do the views of these parties typically reflect the broader community sentiment?” (Issues page 18)*

A very high site coverage, up to 70% on the smallest allotments ensures that our suburbs will be less sustainable as denser, larger dwellings takes the space allocated for trees / shrubs and family gardens which has helped to reduce the reliance on high cost energy air-conditioners in summer. The trees, gardens have traditionally provided a sustainable habitat for indigenous urban wildlife which will die out as we increase our higher housing densification.

We have been led to believe that many property developers seem only interested in there own self interested (profit oriented views and wishes) which are not the same issues of the greater community for sustainable development and quality of life. Today, with the proposed high immigration rates, “populate or perish mentality” these types of pressures on the housing markets are making our housing very unaffordable for those just staring out in life, 18-35 year old’s and for many South Australians and Australians alike.

2. *“Should governments have a role in the merging of small separately-held parcels of land into larger plots in order to facilitate large-scale developments? If so, why?” (Issues page 19)*

SAFRRA believes governments and many corporate agencies should not be involved in merging parcels of residential land to facilitate large-scale developments. The worst example is at Port Adelaide where the destruction of century old wharfs heritage, heritage boat building, local industries, and river open space area. Replaced by poor and some of the worst high rise developments in South Australia has had to endure which was opposed by residents and ratepayers but allowed to happen. Why have consultation. They never listen or amend developments. The vandalism of heritage was allowed by the government to take place is disgraceful.

If the Productivity Council really wants a case to investigate look please look at the LMC conduct and see for itself awful, the depressing development at Port Adelaide. Market forces themselves can change heritage areas for the better. However, if governments wish to be involved in encouraging many large-scale medium / high density housing ventures, then why not purchase polluted redundant industrial or commercial land remediate these sites for housing development.

We have seen large scale open space sell offs - school ovals, schools, university playing fields or heritage hospitals (in South Australia Glenside or even the propose new Royal Adelaide Hospital to redevelop the old site, North Terrace Adelaide) in off school ovals, schools, university playing fields or heritage hospitals built within acreages deemed essential for wellbeing in the 19th century, but now viewed by too many state leaders and politicians as providing extra easy Government revenue. All our public open space is being built on destroying South Australia’s garden city concept / parklands laid out by our founder in 1836 Colonel William Light. Why is an increasing number of public open space sites sold for medium and high density “infill” not only reducing the overall open space for the existing community, but further reduces metres of open space per head of population and will reduce further with a larger population.

**2. “Should governments have a role in the merging of small separately-held parcels of land into larger plots in order to facilitate large-scale developments? If so, why?”
(Issues page 19)**

Residents living in existing residential suburbs should not have these large-scale infill government or private housing projects pushed in their face in their suburb close by. We are displeased by Governments buying large parcels of residential land for major urban infill or close by new suburbs. The public are not happy with the Federal government high population growth strategies and unrealistic, unsustainable high legal rates of immigration of 300,000 per year. The need for upgraded infrastructure with high immigration is making homes unaffordable by ordinary South Australians and Australia know and what about the future housing affordability. We see only more increased congestion, traffic delays, pollution and lower quality of life.

3. “Is information on proposed developments available to local communities and all potential land buyers, or users during the planning/zoning/DA processes in a complete, effective and timely manner?” (Issues page 19)

Most residents have little/no knowledge, expertise when it comes to find this information in their own local communities / or even other communities regarding proposed developments and the development assessment process. This is not good enough. All residents’ neighbours should / must be advised by accident or invited to comment on new housing projects proposed on property next door, nearby, where new housing developments are increasing the rate of residential densities. Currently in South Australia many residents / groups find about these a new residential development coming to their street or close by when they see bulldozers, earth moving equipment and trucks (demolition logos).

In South Australia only our Category 3 development applications under the SA Development Act of 1993 legislation provides for the public notification of this category proposed developments. Very low percentages of all development applications in this State, we believe fewer than 5 per cent. Planning language to the general public is hard to understand unless you’re a planner and should be written in planner English. This is one reason why heading to the ERD (Environment Resources Court), to contest Local Councils rejection of a development for good reason requires the most expensive planning legal team to argue the case. The developers seem to always win against the Local Council own development plans guide lines. Support well by Development lobby groups, especially the Property Council in SA.

Only small numbers of residents actually become involved fighting the worst developments to end up in the ERD and even when they do are upset disgusted by the system. This is why individuals, residents and ratepayers groups finding out about either or on behalf of that neighbours residents when the house is about to be demolish, it most cases too late for more people to have any input into the development assessment process. To residents and ratepayers deliberate secretive planning system designed against the people from having any input into what is developed or planned in their own community in which they live. Residents and Ratepayers are unable to “protect their suburbs quality of life”. With this lack of public consultation or any type of involvement has created anger, super animosity in the community about development. We feel let down, disgusted by the government’s planning regime, shut out off any constructive input to future generations quality of life.

5. “What characteristics make a city more/less liveable and easy for businesses to operate in?” (Issues page 24)

We all know that the government’s desire for a rapid (sudden) population growth has decreased the liveability of Adelaide this includes the combination of environmental, the neighbourhood’s amenities and most individual well-being and mental health.

Why have we allowed the destruction / rape of good quality housing in quality residential suburbs and their awful replacements, higher density -unit dwellings, high site coverage, little or no private outdoor space, most inadequate off-street car-parking provision, and lowest environmental sustainable housing? Our suburbs more and more have become less sustainable as trees and gardens have disappeared but replaced by concrete and paving, which generate large volumes of stormwater run-off. Increased stormwater run-off will cause higher risks of flooding and force local councils needing to invest upgrading stormwater systems to cope with the extra run-off. Who pays the ratepayer with unaffordable council rates fees?

In South Australia and the most of Australia never before have our people have to live so close together in dense housing reduces individual well-being as conflict over noise and life-styles grows. We see the television series “The Bill” and know what we are heading for and this is why many migrants have come to South Australia /Australia to get away from and make a better life (safer environment) for themselves and their children here. Residents are being driven crazy by the noise generated by residents in new close infill housing. The prison mentality that is higher rear and side fencing as residents try to protect their privacy with the new dense housing surrounding them with no back yards to talk about/gardens on the adjacent properties. Again mental health issues arise.

The DAC has a 100% record of approving applications which have been refused by the Adelaide City Council’s DAP. All of the members of the DAC are directly appointed by the Minister of Planning, and only hold that position via the Minister. The residents and ratepayers are powerless, as either political party whoever is in power behaves the same when it comes to planning and development. In SA when the government want a project to be unopposed re its development it has the” Major Development Status” which over-rides Council Development Plans so that Adelaide can be made more unattractive to please the developers at all costs. Why no democracy.

SAFRRA believes residents must have a say about proposed new developments and having a say the community will have better improved local knowledge new developments for the benefit of all our residents. The majority of Residents & Ratepayers Associations with the high cost of public liability insurance and office bearers insurance \$1200 plus per year, every year are precluded, censored, smear campaigns against individual R & R office bearers and see the sham of democracy is diminished. We see only governments and the rich and powerful having a say in everything in particular planning and have had enough of it.

Dense housing developments, people well-being destroyed, ongoing road congestion, high population growth targets and housing densification have major impacts the community.

6. “What challenges do governments and communities face in pursuit of liveability goals? How can these be addressed by planning, zoning and DA systems?”

(Issues page 24)

We see overnight population growth, associated housing shortages, high rents, and increased high density housing densification policies eroding sustaining liveability standards in all Australian cities today. Why not the population into many regional towns and areas decentralise could help reduce pressure on Australian cities. Please legislate these planning policies for the future. Rural farming communities are dissatisfied with proposed new growth areas that are over the top with no real infrastructure built in to this type of growth and the building of homes on prime farming land especially in the Adelaide Hills madness.

The notion of decentralized is apposed by the government instead lets have more and more congested in our city areas. We see a decentralization policy helping to make our cities liveable by reducing population and development pressures. Our cities will not be liveable places, again by being too big, congested and water supply. In Adelaide’s case our new desal plant will and has increased water costs to the consumer and is some cases for the most vulnerable low income residents unaffordable and gardens are perishing as a result. Many are residents are unable to water their gardens(affordability / water restrictions) and as a result lawns die outdoor activities gone backyard football, cricket games, barbecues and vegetable gardens unaffordable to grow.

7. “What are the social, environmental and economic reasons for which governments may wish to control the supply of appropriately zoned sites for development?”

(Issues page 29)

Most planning profession are better equipped to answer this question. By restricting the green fields site availability, even in areas zoned for residential development, the Government owned “Land Management Corporation” maximises the dollar value of every allotment by creating a “shortage premium”, where potential land purchases are forced to outbid other interested purchases. This rise in land value, as a total proportion of any (house and land cost), is detrimental to the wellbeing of the current young adults soon leaving home, who are forced to pay higher rents for higher value dwellings available, which makes their opportunities to save to purchase their own free-hold dwelling even harder.

8. “Should local and state governments require developers to commence development within a certain time frame? What discourages timely completion of developments?” *(Issues page 29)*

Yes, developers must be required to commence development within a certain time frame. In Adelaide we see too many vacant sites, left in a derelict form and in sometimes unsafe conditions for long periods of time. Many factors may contribute to these delays in completing developments, economic conditions. We believe at times there are real genuine delays caused by the planning process itself. Unfortunately some developers are too close / have a conflict of interest with local and state government and are allowed to vandalise this heritage (demolition), destroying the city Adelaide’s unique character for profit.

Some developers hold onto pieces of land expecting the properties to appreciate in value over time and when it seems most profitable they attempt to sell these properties. In particular many heritage properties are left vacant to be vandalised and then lose their heritage significance which makes more profit for the developer (subdivisions). The land kept vacant should be required to be landscaped to improve its appearance if the development is delayed.

9. “What impact would limiting opportunities for third party objections/appeals and so fast-tracking projects through planning and DA processes have on the supply of land for different uses?” (Issues page 29)

We believe by limiting third party objections / appeals through planning and DA processes will have a very minor impact on the supply of land for different uses in South Australia. SA have minor / low numbers of DA cases which even allow third party appeals / objections in the State, so as a result we would have little or no impact regarding the supply of land.

Thank you for the opportunity allowing us to make these comments.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Kaeding

President

South Australian Federation of Residents and Ratepayers Associations Inc

Enc. Photo 1. “Sanctuary Court” 167 Tapleys Hill Road, Seaton – High Density.

Photo 2. Corner Matthews Avenue / Tapleys Hill Road, Seaton.

Photo 3. Tapleys Hill Road Seaton – High density development.

Photo 4. 30 Falcon Ave, Mile End – New Development in a heritage street.

Photo 5. 21 Bagot St, Mile End – New Development in Character Street.

Photo’s 1-5 are in there groups (multiple photo’s)

The Advertiser paper cuttings:

“Battle for the city skyline” July 14, 2010 - Adelaide

“Long road to a crowd future” July 26, 2010 - Mt Barker

“Council shrinks ‘wasteful’ plan August 5, 2010 – Mt Barker