

Friday, 3 September, 2010

Ms Louise Sylvan
Commissioner
Business Regulation Benchmarking
— Planning, Zoning and Development Assessments
Productivity Commission
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Dear Louise,

**Performance Benchmarking of Australian Business Regulation:
Planning, Zoning and Development Assessments**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this review and for meeting with us on Friday, 9 July, 2010.

The Development Assessment Forum (DAF) is an independent think tank and advisory forum of government, industry, and the professions.

Our [Charter](#) is to promote leading practice in planning systems and development assessment in Australia through:

- the national harmonisation of similar systems and requirements between jurisdictions;
- the adoption of processes that are efficient and cost effective for proponents, governments, industry, and the community;
- improved access for stakeholders to information on leading practice methodologies and outcomes; and
- the adoption and implementation of e-planning systems.

As a general principle, the DAF believes that the appropriate reform of our planning and development assessment systems could deliver tangible benefits for all stakeholders.

However, as a think tank we have no single view on specific priorities, nor do we advocate for individual reform initiatives.

Accordingly, I am unable in this submission to provide you with specific advice on what needs to be benchmarked.

Reform Initiatives

The DAF has done significant work in the area of development assessment, some of which has already been made available to you.

These include:

- [DAF Principles](#);
- [DAF Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment](#);
- [Benchmarking Report](#);
- [Guide to Writing Objective Rules and Tests](#);

- Leveraging the Long-Term: An Operational Model of Leading Practice Development Assessment:
 - [Volume 1](#);
 - [Volume 2](#);
- [Comparative Performance Measurement and Benchmarking of Planning and Development Assessment Systems](#); and
- [DAF Good Strategic Planning Guide](#).

Details of each of these projects can be found at our website: www.daf.gov.au.

The above papers represent the outputs of DAF's research agenda and make recommendations on the effective reform of Australia's development assessment and planning systems.

They highlight key areas that might be benchmarked and offer potential reform targets.

In addition, the DAF's members individually have their own views on where reform might be needed, and they will no doubt be providing you separately with details of their own research.

Future Work Program

The DAF has committed itself to an extensive work program for the next twelve months.

This will see us pursuing the following projects:

- **Referrals** – developing guidelines that set out principles and best practice for the referral and concurrence of applications to and between agencies;
- **Private Sector Involvement** – collating of a series of case studies where private sector practitioners have played a role in the development approvals system and what impact they may have had;
- **Tracks** – clarifying each of the development assessment 'tracks' identified in the Leading Practice Model and identifying the steps that might be taken in each to assess applications;
- **Applications** – identifying the barriers to processing applications in order to target educational or reform strategies to overcome them; and
- **Planning Systems Reform** – identifying the principles and processes inherent in 'competent' planning systems. This project was approved in principle at the last DAF meeting and is currently being scoped. More details will be available in the next couple of months.

If required, we would be more than willing to provide you with further material on these projects.

The DAF is also reviewing and augmenting our communications and education strategies in order to promote our activities more effectively.

Partnership

The DAF is in a unique position to provide the Commission with a sounding board, and partner, for its work in this area.

I again extend our offer to you to act as a conduit to our respective memberships.

We appreciated your attendance at our last meeting in July and are keen for you to come to our December meeting to update us on your progress.

If you seek further information from me or the DAF itself, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



***Paul Waterhouse
Chairman
Development Assessment Forum***