

Coalition for Planning Reform



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NEWS RELEASE

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Weatherill gets development visions, Libs need policy

The Weatherill Government's current flurry of new plans for Adelaide shows the ALP desperate to create a "vision" before the March 2014 election, but it's a vision produced without genuine community engagement – despite the Government's rhetoric.

On the one hand, South Australia's Expert Panel on Planning Reform, launched only in February 2013, continues with its "very wide remit to review the State's planning system"¹. On the other hand, the Government is rushing through wholesale, long-term changes that pre-empt and potentially undermine the outcomes of its own Expert Panel.

Last week the Government announced that the Inner Metro Growth Project would radically change how urban development can proceed in key suburbs and stop key councils from assessing high-rise design. This decision ignored long-expressed community concerns and most affected Mayors were furious.

"This announcement was just a slap in the face to those of us in the community who are keen to see improved transparency and consultation when major planning decisions are made," said Professor Norman Etherington, President of the National Trust SA. "Surely the Premier can see the massive loss of community support.

"The Government itself says: 'Our vision is for government to make better decisions by bringing the voices of communities and stakeholders into the issues that are relevant to them'.² But the Weatherill Government is not properly engaging communities and stakeholders in planning matters, where its recent decisions seem contrived and desperate," he said.

Also last week, a new Women's and Children's Hospital – said to be ready in 2023 – was announced. Yet busy clinicians and community members have been given just four weeks to comment on the idea.

Then, only yesterday, a front-page story told us the old Women's and Children's Hospital would become athletes' accommodation, to be sold as private housing to offset the \$2 billion budgeted to stage the 2030 Commonwealth Games (assuming Adelaide wins the right to be host city).

"As far as I can see, in the absence of a mining boom, the Weatherill Government's economic vision revolves almost entirely around development driven by population growth," said Professor Rob Fowler, President of the Conservation Council SA.

¹ SA Government website: "Think Design Deliver: South Australia's Expert Panel on Planning Reform"
<http://saplan.org.au/yoursay/think-design-deliver> accessed 13/11/02.

² SA Government website: "Better Together: Principles of Community Engagement"
http://saplan.org.au/better_together accessed 13/11/02.

“But where will all these new South Australians come from? And what plans are being made to ensure South Australia is sustainable through the 21st century?”

The hospital announcement came just days after Mr Weatherill launched a 30-year plan to upgrade South Australia’s public transport services and major road infrastructure. Yet people across the State have only until 29 November to visit a one-day regional or suburban shopping centre display and to give their views on the *Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan*.

“What sort of engagement is that? Few people have the time or expertise to fully grasp complex proposals in just a few weeks, so the Government’s consultation becomes little more than a popularity contest held on social media,” said Mr Tom Matthews, President of the Community Alliance SA.

But that’s not all. On October 15 Parliament approved the Urban Renewal Amendment Bill, giving the Planning Minister extensive new powers.

“Both major parties thumbed their noses at most of the recommendations put forward by the Government’s own Expert Panel, headed by Brian Hayes QC, to improve the legislation. And still we await the Expert Panel’s progress report, due in December when Stage 2 of its extensive consultation and review is complete,” Mr Matthews said.

“Clearly, the Weatherill government is rushing to ensure the development industry is on-side during the coming State election by touting rosy visions of what SA’s future might be like for today’s children,” Prof Etherington said.

“The Government held a series of discussions with builders expressly to remove barriers to project approvals³, but it continues to ignore community concerns about the scale and extent of its pro-development policies,” Prof Fowler said. “What do the Liberals say about this? It seems they are still formulating their own policies on planning and, meantime, offer no serious resistance to the Government’s wave of initiatives.

“The Liberals need to make clear whether they are willing to challenge the Weatherill government’s rush to irreversibly alter South Australia’s planning landscape. In particular, they need to present an alternative vision that resonates with the community,” he said.

EDITORS: See overleaf for a list of the Government’s recent major planning changes.

* **The Coalition for Planning Reform** includes Community Alliance SA, Conservation Council of South Australia and the National Trust of South Australia, representing more than 120 community groups concerned about planning in SA.

Contacts

Mr Tom Matthews
President
Community Alliance SA
0429 337 453

Professor Rob Fowler
President
Conservation Council SA
0410 498 507

Professor Norman Etherington
President
National Trust of SA
08 8267 1714

³ News release from John Rau (Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Planning Minister), 30 October 2013: “Stamp duty relief boosts construction sector optimism”.

http://www.premier.sa.gov.au/images/news_releases/13_10Oct/construction.pdf

Recent planning changes – why the rush, Weatherill?

October 2013

- Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan launched
- Housing in the City policy announced
- New Women's and Children's Hospital announced
- Athletes' village at old Women's and Children's Hospital announced
- Urban Renewal Bill passed
- Riverbank Development Plan Amendment (DPA) approved
- Inner Metro Growth Project rezonings approved via DPAs, affecting five councils:
 - Burnside
 - Prospect
 - Unley
 - West Torrens
 - Norwood, Payneham & St Peters

Still to come: major rezonings pending approval

- Norwood, Payneham and St Peters Residential Development DPA
- West Lakes (AAMI Stadium)
- Woodville Station
- Playford Growth Project (Structure Plan and two DPAs)
- Kangaroo Island project (Planning Strategy, Structure Plan and DPA)
- Adelaide Shores DPA
- Institutional (St Andrew's) interim operation DPA