

Rights at risk in new charter for planning decisions

A new 'Community Engagement Charter' proposed by the State Government looks set to further diminish the rights of ordinary South Australians to have a say in planned developments that impact on their homes, neighbourhoods and local environments.

The State Government is asking a panel of randomly selected South Australians to come up with ways "to put the people at the centre of major planning decisions."

But their options to answer this question have been curtailed before they commenced their deliberations. The decisions that most directly affect us all - those on assessing proposed developments - have been explicitly excluded from coverage by the charter and taken out of the reach of individuals, communities and local councils.

We risk further silencing public concerns about inappropriate and unlawful developments if the proposed charter does not protect and enhance rights to information, consultation and review.

The Community Alliance, representing more than 25 community and residents organisations, asks:

- **How will public rights to information, input and review be protected under the proposed charter of community engagement?**
- **What new rights will the proposed charter give to ordinary people, community organisations and local government?**

Planning Minister John Rau has been insisting that he only wants the public to be involved in decisions around planning policy and rules **and not** in the assessment of individual development proposals. While it may be convenient for the Minister and the development industry to exclude the public from this key aspect of planning decision making, what ordinary South Australians want is to have a guaranteed say in development proposals that will directly affect their communities, their properties and their quality of life.

Putting people at the centre of the planning system means guaranteeing rights to information about development proposals. It means guaranteeing rights to respond to those proposals and to have those responses heard in a fair, open and transparent way before developments are approved.

We call on the Government to show how the proposed charter will guarantee the rights of South Australians to have a say in the assessment of development proposals that will affect them and how they intend to ensure that those rights are enforceable under law.

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