

Monday 9 December, 2019
ABC Radio Adelaide
Peter Goers interview with Elizabeth Vines and Allan Holmes

Elizabeth Vines, Conservation and Heritage Consultant & Allan Holmes, Member, State Planning Commission (ABC RADIO ADELAIDE 19.39-19.53) New planning laws

Goers: *The South Australian Government's draft Planning and Design Code was released on the 1st of October and there is a great deal of angst and unhappiness from the Community Alliance and Heritage Alliance groups in South Australia. Elizabeth Vines ... we're about to speak with Allan Holmes ... what do you make of it all, Elizabeth, what's the status?)*

Vines: Well, there's a great deal of concern that a document has been knowingly released with errors, so how can the public provide feedback when we are constantly being told at information evenings which are being held that the document has been released with errors. It's extremely difficult to navigate. The online mapping tool is incomprehensible to use. At the information evening I went to, even the presenter from DPTI didn't know how to bring up one of the layers, couldn't use it, and had to be informed one of the people there, so there's a huge groundswell of opinion and, as you know, Peter, there was a Bill passed in the Upper House this week asking for it to be delayed, which the Labor Party has supported. DPTI staff themselves, we understand, want delay, residents want delay, the community wants delay, it's just been too rushed, that's our concern. *(Goers: This refers to the contributory items, the heritage contributory items.)*

Vines: Oh no, I'm talking about the overall Planning and Design Code, and what our concern is that the Chair of the State Planning Commission, when he briefed the Cabinet members, told Parliamentary representatives that this new Design Code, it's largely about transitioning and passing over, consolidating existing contemporary policy from individual Council Development Plans and now it is not. There are major new policies of which one, you know, Peter, I'm very concerned about, which is the loss of listing of contributory items, but that's just one of the many, many areas where this Code is sorely wanting and people are quite frankly outraged about it now. *(Goers: If this Code is enacted, what will we see? What differences will we see, Lizzie?)*

Vines: We'll see loss of protection of local character, we'll see Local Governments incredibly frustrated that all their efforts over the past decade to write into Development Plans policies which relate to their areas, they're all being swept aside because it's a one-size-fits-all approach to the state, and ... you mentioned contributory items, that's just one of them any aspects. There's changes to zone density, site coverages, frontage variation and even in my street, Peter, which is well known to many because it's got the St Peters Bakery at the end of the street, that's proposed for six storeys. *(Goers: Six storeys.) Vines: Six storeys. (Goers: What, your street or ... Stephen Terrace?) Vines: No, no, on Stephen Terrace where there is the St Peters Bakery. That is currently now proposed in that particular zone for up to six storeys. (Goers: Good heavens.) Vines: ... there is concern, there's justifiable concern. (Goers: So, this is more urban infill.)*

Vines: Well, it's consolidation and intensification in areas ... these areas which contain heritage character are only three per cent of the metropolitan area, three per cent, and that's what we're asking, for it to be protected, but in this little zone called the suburban main street zone at the end of my street in St Peters, it's now going to be designated low to medium rise, which essentially means it can go up to six storeys. *(Goers: Let's go to Allan Holmes ... what do you say to this, Allan, please?)*

Holmes: Well, Peter, I'd say that I disagree largely with many of the things that Liz has said ... she starts out by saying that we've knowingly released a draft code with errors, and that's just not right. We've released a draft code for public consultation ... it's a complex task to shift from 72 development plans to a single code ... of course, in doing that, there will be some errors. *(Goers:*

Oh, there are errors.) **Holmes:** As I said, Peter, in such a complex task, it's inevitable that there will be, but we didn't set out to make errors as Lizzie implies. *(Goers: But that doesn't build confidence in the plan if there are errors in it.)*

Holmes: It depends ... where you're coming from. If you listen to me, Peter, I'm giving you an assurance that this has been done appropriately, that there is a period of public consultation, that people have an opportunity to review and correct errors if they're there ... the sky's not falling in. This is an important reform in South Australia to make the planning system work more effectively. *(Goers: Six-storey buildings on Stephen Terrace, St Peters and many other streets.)*

Holmes: ... I don't know the detail of Stephen Terrace ... you come to the issue of increased infill or greater densification for cities, what's the choice that we've got? Do we want to spread the city on the margins or do we want to increase the density of living? And people are choosing density over extending the margins. *(Goers: Let's go back to Elizabeth Vines ... that is a valid point, Lizzie, what do you make of that?)*

Vines: Oh, I think it's very valid and I'm not saying that we don't want development, we just want development in the appropriate location, and I would say to Allan that I've read the Design Code and that when he says he doesn't know what's happening in Stephen Terrace, that's a problem. I know that the suburban main street zone in that area is newly designated low to medium rise. This is what people are objecting to. *(Goers: And where else? ...)*

Vines: There are other areas along main arterial roads where that is the case, and yes, in some cases, it's appropriate. But in other areas in arterial roads, it's not appropriate because of existing heritage character, and what is the concern, Peter, of Local Government that these decades of planning that they've been doing to get their policies correct, and they've been negotiating these with State Government for years, and they're all being swept aside, and getting back to contributory items, the Government continues to say, don't worry - the historic area statements will provide the protection you need. And you know ... these haven't yet been released. And councils were asked about four weeks ago to do this. Why is there this rush ... *(Goers: Good question – why is this rush ...)*

Holmes: ... I don't think there's a rush at all. I think you've got a deadline of the middle of next year to complete the code, so there's a timetable one has to work to. We still have another couple of months of public consultation to deal with the issues that Liz talks about. I don't think we're that far apart. I'm concerned about poor quality in-fill ... about the bad things that are occurring in the city and as are all of the commission members. It's our intent to try and improve the system through the drafting of this code, and it's on public consultation so people can have their say and can make their contributions *(Goers: But will they be listened to?)*

Holmes: [Laughs] Of course they will be listened to ... one has to be an optimist and ... adopt a positive manner *(Goers: ... you must be aware of an enormous opposition to all this ... I've never seen so much opposition against really a government plan. Whole groups have been started to oppose this. People are not happy, you must admit ...)*

Holmes: ... there's an active movement. Whether it's huge, I'd dispute that. It's perhaps a couple of hundred people ... and it reflects a certain sector of South Australian society. There are a whole lot of other people who don't have those voices and probably have a different perspective on development in the state. The commission is bound to listen to those people as well *(Goers: Few people want a six-storey building next to their house ...)*

Holmes: I honestly don't know. Six storeys in the appropriate location is fine by me *(Goers: But you've got a Federation villa and you bought that because it was a nice area and had a nice heritage feel. Suddenly somebody is going to come along and put a six storey block of flats there)* **Holmes:** I would maintain that the heritage protections in the draft code would prevent that from happening *(Goers: Would they, Lizzie Vines ...)*

Vines: There is ... at the end of Sixth Avenue, St Peters ... adjacent to an historic area overlay ... and what is proposed in the code currently is for up to six storeys in that location. Our problem ...

is having been to one information evening where the presenter from DPTI introduced it by saying, we know there are errors in this document ... but we want your input. **The issue is, we would appreciate being issued a document which doesn't have errors so we know what we're commenting on. We don't want these shifting goal posts.** We have been told on 19th of December there will be a document released ... I think it's called the companion document, although DPTI seem to be confused about this ... which will correct these errors. So ... are there two documents we're supposed to be consulting on and responding to? We get that on 19th December ... this is not appropriate consultation ... has not been appropriate consultation all the way through. And all we're asking for is a delay (*Goers: This began with the previous government didn't it ... controversially*) **Vines:** It did (*Goers: Caller Bob on Eyre Peninsula says the consultation has already closed in regional areas. Is this correct, Allan?*)

Holmes: Yeah, that is correct. There are three phases to the code ... the outback code which is in operation; phase two ... most of regional South Australia comment closed on that draft at the end of November (*Goers: ... watch this space ... it's a big campaign against this ...*)

Vines: One demonstration outside the Premier's office last Friday. And we'll just have to continue to do that if we're not listened to. What we are asking for, as is the Labor Party now, as is the Local Government Association, as are many people, is for a delay and that it will not be ready by July 1st, 2020. It just does not get enough time for ... these errors ... they release a document, can you imagine ... standing up at consultation saying we know there are errors ... it doesn't reassure the audience (*Goers: What about those errors ... does that not concern you as a member of the State Planning Commission?*)

Holmes: ... what I think the presenter has done is just been incredibly frank with the audience ... we're translating 72 development plans to a single code; it's 30,000 pages of documentation to 2,500. And ... within that process there will be errors; it's a statement of fact, it's not saying it's error-ridden ... it's saying one would expect to find some mistakes and ... we will correct them on the way. We have a four-month period in which those corrections are taking place. **So ... cool heads ought to prevail ... we can do this, we can improve the planning system and I think there's a lot of mischief out there in terms of provoking public angst and concern which shouldn't be the case** (*Goers: ... there are huge environmental concerns when we lose land ... this has been going on for a long time ... houses get bigger on the block, we lose run-off, and this is just getting worse ... our population grows ... and we're already in this enormous city for a small population how much bigger can we get? There's a lot here and ... it's a hot issue and we will return to it. I thank you both for coming on ...*)