

Coalition for Planning Reform



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO LISTENING – *WITH ITS EARS CLOSED!*

The Government is ignoring the community and its own Expert Panel on Planning Reform!

The Government wants to have the very contentious and controversial Urban Renewal Bill passed by Parliament very shortly.

A coalition of 120 community groups is calling for a halt to the passage of this new Bill through State Parliament while the Government's own Expert Panel is conducting a review of the State's planning system.

Professor Rob Fowler, Convenor of the new Coalition for Planning Reform and President of the Conservation Council of SA, says that the Premier, Jay Weatherill, proclaimed that his government would consult extensively with the community and listen closely to their concerns.

"But when it comes to the planning system, Deputy Premier and Minister for Planning, John Rau, has clearly missed the community engagement bus", says Prof. Fowler.

"He has ignored not only the strongly voiced concerns of community organisations, but also the advice of the Expert Panel he appointed earlier this year to review the current planning system".

Mr Tom Matthews, President of the Community Alliance, also questions the course taken by the Government.

"The Expert Panel made a number of comments and suggestions but our expert legal advice shows most of them were ignored by the Planning Minister," Mr Matthews said

"Why ask for their advice on the Bill if it's then largely ignored? Does this mean that the Planning Minister, if re-elected, will simply ignore the Expert Panel's recommendations on planning reform when it reports in December 2014?"

Prof. Fowler says the Coalition is deeply concerned that the Bill will establish a parallel planning system for urban renewal projects that has very few of the checks and balances contained in the current system. He says it could see neighbourhoods significantly transformed without any reasonable opportunity for their residents to be involved in the decisions made.

According to the Coalition, there are numerous, substantial issues including:

- a council's planning powers and functions will be taken over by the 'precinct authority'
- a 'precinct' can be established without any consultation with the public or local community, and its planning process will over-ride Development Plans
- the Minister can establish a 'precinct' based on a 'business case', which does not go out for any public consultation
- a precinct could be any size, situated anywhere and may not be restricted to the purposes of urban renewal.

The Coalition is calling for the Premier to rein in his Planning Minister and instruct him to refer the Bill to the Expert Panel for consideration in its review of various options for reform of the planning system.

"It appears to the CPR that the Minister is determined to ram this Bill through Parliament as quickly as possible, in defiance of the many serious concerns raised in relation to it," said Prof. Fowler

"Putting this Bill on hold pending the report of its Expert Panel next year would be a good way for the Premier to demonstrate his commitment to community engagement and that he understands the unrest that has led to the creation of this new Coalition".

"The Premier's credibility is on the line over the way the Government handles this Bill", said Prof. Fowler.

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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.

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