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Engaging for Reform



30th August 2013

For the attention of:
Tony Lawson,
Executive Officer,
Local Excellence Expert Panel
expertpanel@lga.sa.gov.au

**Submission on the Local Excellence Expert Panel
'Towards the Council of the Future' Discussion Paper, June 2013**

Dear Mr Lawson and Members of the Expert Panel,

The Community Alliance SA is an umbrella organisation comprised of a large number of resident and community groups from Adelaide and other areas of South Australia. We are concerned with the lack of opportunity for genuine community engagement and participation in the current planning and development system. Our aim is:

'To put the people back into planning and development'

We are pleased to have an opportunity to give our input into this Discussion Paper.

The Community Alliance and its members recognise and greatly value the role that local government can have in representing local communities and responding to their needs, particularly in relation to planning and development.

However, for some time our members have been concerned that with an increasing number of Ministerial Development Plan Amendments (DPAs) and pressures on councils to rezone areas for urban development, and the processes involving DPAC and the ERD Court, the ability of local communities to have meaningful input into proposals for urban development through their local councils and elected members has been progressively undermined.

The diminishing role of local government in major planning decisions, along with a lack of genuine community engagement, means that the current planning system is not responsive to local community and residents' input into important aspects of planning for local areas, which could otherwise result in a much better outcome. This is compounded by a lack of accountable and transparent decision-making in the planning system.

In writing your report, we would like you to consider what the Community Alliance SA would like to see in the planning system, which relates to governance at both a state and a local level:

1. Integrated planning

We would like a planning system that delivers integrated planning, based on high quality research, and which integrates early on in the planning process issues such as transport planning, infrastructure provision, environmental and social aspects, sustainable design, employment and economic viability.

2. Genuine community engagement

We would like a planning system where governing bodies, developers and communities come together to enter a meaningful dialogue and learn from each other, with the communities engaged from the onset and actively involved in the planning process. Information about proposed developments should be easy to understand and readily accessible throughout the process and this engagement should continue in an open and collaborative manner, from the development of strategic plans to the issuing of building approval.

3. Transparent and accountable decision-making

We would like a planning system where all decision-making is transparent and accountable, and the decision-making process is genuinely independent, independently reviewed and subject to public and parliamentary scrutiny. We believe that the appointed bodies responsible for decision-making should be independent of ministerial or industry control, follow a widely understood set of guidelines supported by the Law, and provide access to both the details of the proposal and their reasons for approving or rejecting it. Genuine and extensive expert and community consultation should play a central role in this formal decision-making process.

Thank you for your consideration of our submission.

Tom Matthews

President

Dr Helen Wilmore

Secretary

www.communityalliancesa.org.au