

# Why don't they listen?

CAROLE WHITELOCK

DO you ever get the feeling that the layer of “experts”, planners, officials and organisers who run society aren’t the slightest bit interested in what we, the citizens, think or want?

I was listening to a radio discussion recently on which a panel of architects, planners and sociologists were talking about “density”. No, I don’t mean the prevalence of sheer human stupidity,

but the sacred duty, as they see it, to cram as many of us as possible into the most “economical” space.

They were singing the praises of a proposed development which would contain 39 dwellings per hectare. A hectare is apparently 2.471 acres – sounds a bit too squeezey to me.

What made me really mad was that these smug arbiters of how we are sup-

posed to live said they were maintaining a very positive attitude to plans like this “in spite of the public backlash”. What incredible arrogance.

Why did the fact that there was such a backlash not tell them something, namely that humans don’t flourish – mentally or physically – when we are crammed too tightly together. For a long time, architects, governments and plan-

ners insisted that high-rise blocks of flats were an ideal and cost-effective way of housing people. After many years of problems, they have at last begun to re-think, and many of those vertical ghettos are being demolished.

Adelaide is blessed with a preponderance of homes in their own space. Their gardens are a joy and sanctuary to the owners and a pleasure to passersby. We are constantly told that this way of living is outmoded, and that “high density” is what we should aspire to.

What doesn’t seem to be considered in this proscriptive argument is that people like living this way and will con-

tinue to do so, whatever these social urgers say.

Another “they’re not listening” issue is the proposal to allow cyclists to ride on the footpath. Before this practice became legal, I saw a young bloke riding very quickly along the pavement on Norwood Parade.

Only the fast backward leap of the diners leaving a cafe saved them from serious injury. Anyone elderly, disabled, partially sighted or unfit would not have made it.

Of course cyclists deserve consideration and to be safe, but I have yet to speak to a single person who thinks that

their riding on the footpath is a good idea.

There’s a lot of talk about “public consultation” and “taking into account the views of the community” in so many contexts. Pity there’s not much listening going on.

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