

## PLANNING

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [5.21 pm]: I rise today to talk a bit about planning because it would be fair to say that over the last month we have probably seen some of the biggest planning changes in this state—certainly for a few decades—around how some approvals are reached, and I think that warrants some comment. I am sure that everyone here is aware of those changes. We have now seen the threshold for the joint development assessment panel drop to \$2 million. It would be fair to say there are no developments that are not worth \$2 million, so pretty well every development will have the option of going to a JDAP instead of a local government. We have also seen the creation of the permanent state development assessment unit. That is probably more significant for major developments. Maybe there are some question marks about that, but certainly up to this point, the SDAUs do not need to stick to local planning schemes; they can actually make decisions inconsistent with local planning schemes. Both those things take planning control away from local communities. At the heart of this decision has been very much something that I agree with and am passionate about. Although I do not agree with the way it has come about; I agree with the outcome to try to ramp up infill and density. We have seen that drop to some of the lowest levels in many years. I think the last number that came out was that only 29 per cent of new dwellings were built within the existing urban fabric, meaning 71 per cent—the vast majority—are being built as urban sprawl out on the urban fringes, bulldozing their way through a biodiversity hot spot. Even worse, the vast majority of the remaining 29 per cent are just single houses that are being built within the urban fabric. We are not getting urban density right and as a city we are not getting that planning right.

Another bit of information that came out this week and got me asking questions was that the Premier and others started talking about needing to make sure that we get density in what was called “priority infill locations”. I had not heard that term before, so I asked a question about it yesterday. Hon Sue Ellery replied and basically pointed me to a document. This document was pretty obscure, really, and was not located where I would normally look to find planning policies. The document is titled *Infrastructure development fund stream 2: Unlocking infill precincts: Guidelines for applicants*. This new idea of priority infill locations is defined in that document. Let us dig down a bit further. This document for applicants in which priority infill is defined states that priority infill locations include the whole of the central subregion of the Perth metropolitan area, Metronet station precincts or within 1 000 metres of a Metronet station precinct, and sites identified for housing diversity pipeline projects. Frankly, that means all of a sudden priority infill can be done in half of Perth. The whole of the central area. To put this in context, I do not know whether the people of Leeming know that that is now place where priority infill can happen. I am not sure that the people of Balga or Carine know that they are places where priority infill is going to happen, or in Bicton or in Bassendean. One of my staff members lives in Bassendean. She wrote to me saying, I refer to my notes —

Our place in Basso is a great example for ... the lack of planning logic here—there’s no shops or services in walking distance, the bus network is virtually non existent, we back onto an industrial area, land is relatively cheap, and the slightly more walkable end of the suburb is in the swan river flood plain!

But it is still a priority infill area. Do members know which suburbs are not priority infill areas? This really frustrates me and illustrates where we are going wrong in our planning. Joondalup is not a priority infill area. Armadale is not a primary infill area. Midland and Cockburn Central are not primary infill areas. They are key places where there are train stations. Planning documents across both sides of government, be it *Directions 2031* or *Perth and Peel@3.5 million*, state that density should go around train stations as we try to create transit-oriented developments. They now sit outside priority infill areas. I am being a bit blunt here. I do not know what is happening with planning in this state. How did we get to this point? All of a sudden we are literally smearing what can only be called ad hoc density across our inner suburbs without any refinement or proper plan while places that are desperately calling for more people are left out. If you go speak to the mayors of Joondalup and Armadale; they want density and people living in their town centres. But the government is not giving any incentives for that. In fact, it is not even part of the planning anymore.

How did we get here? I honestly do not know. This is not the kind of smart, good planning that this state needs. We need to get back to key planning documents and away from this ad hoc density, which, frankly, gets community members’ backs up when apartments are randomly built in backyards hard up against single residential. We wonder why we get pushback. Of course we do. Do you know what? It is not approved by the local council; it is approved by another authority that they have little say in. No wonder we are not taking our community on the density journey and are getting what can only be called a density hangover that will give us the next generation of pushback.

I have some quick constructive suggestions as we go forward. We need a proper density plan that is well refined and properly targets density. It is not that complicated. It is around train stations but not just Metronet train stations out on the urban fringe. It is around existing activity centres. It is around key train stations on the Fremantle, Midland and Armadale lines. That is where we need it. Why are we not talking about that? I do not understand. That is clearly where density needs to go. The other thing we need to do is to actually work with local governments.

Do you know what? Most local governments want density; they want people and they want apartments. This idea that we try to ride over the top of them is madness. Work with local governments and help them get it. As a former mayor, we worked extremely hard to get density. It was a great frustration for me that we never got support to get people living in our town centre when there was such an opportunity there. There is a real opportunity to work with and incentivise local governments to do it. It is a simple idea.

Imagine if the state government said to local governments, “If you meet your density targets, here is a range of new grants that you can apply for local facilities—for schools, pools and parks.” Imagine that. We would have local governments queueing up to get density in the right locations in their suburbs. For me, this is the smart way we need to be doing density. This idea that we are going to have developer-led ad hoc density in our suburbs is daft. We will not take our community with us and it does not get us good planning outcomes.

I think that most local governments in our city would agree that it is frustrating. It feels like this whole approach to planning that we have at the moment is literally trying to take on a couple of western suburbs councils instead of acknowledging the bunch of other councils out there—we have 30 metropolitan councils—the majority of them want to work with state government to increase density in their areas and actually make it happen. There is a really constructive way forward on this. I am concerned about where we are going, but I hope that this has provided at least a bit of an understanding around some of the options out there. Thank you.

*House adjourned at 5.30 pm*

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