



30 June 2010

**PUBLIC**

Hon Brian Ellis MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Perth WA 6000

**Re: Inquiry into Shack Sites in Western Australia**

Dear Chairman

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA WA) is pleased to provide comment on the **Inquiry into Shack Sites in Western Australia**. UDIA (WA) is the peak body representing the property industry in Western Australia with members engaged in a range of disciplines including land development, planning, environmental planning, urban design, infrastructure and engineering.

UDIA's policy position calls for the equitable application of planning and environmental policies throughout Western Australia and is committed to sustainable development of the urban environment taking into consideration the full gamut of social, economic and environmental factors involved in the process.

UDIA objects to the extension of squatter occupation of Wedge and Grey as good public administration demands a consistent application of policy and the Minister's decision denies this.

It is our view that the principle of equity in the application of policy for the use and development of Crown Land on our fragile coast has been overlooked by the recent decision of the Minister for the Environment to disregard the deadline for removal of shacks from Wedge and Grey by June 2011 or at completion of the extension of Indian Ocean Drive, whichever came sooner.

The Minister's decision pays no attention to the Wedge and Grey Master Plan (CALM 2000) which provides a framework to guide future planning, development and management of the area in a sustainable manner. It also undermines the capacity for the Shire of Dandaragan to implement those areas of the Master Plan which fall under its jurisdiction and its own 'Concept Plan of Coastal Nodes North of Jurien Bay'.

**Need for respect of relevant policy provisions**

Squatter settlements at Wedge and Grey are subject to two key planning instruments:

1. The State Government Squatter Policy (1999) whose stated objective is:

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*"to control the establishment of any new unlawful dwellings (squatter shacks) on coastal Crown land and facilitate the removal of existing dwellings (shacks) over a six year period"*

2. Master Plan Wedge and Grey (CALM 2000) which identifies the following problems with squatter occupation along the Western Australian coast:

Environmental Impact

- Settlements are unplanned, uncontrolled and have an adverse impact of fragile coastal environments they are located on.

Environmental Health

- Sewage and waste disposal systems are inadequate and can become serious health risks.
- Components of below standard buildings and structures may become hazardous during storms.

Exclusive Use and Financial Advantage

- The shacks occupy attractive coastal locations that would otherwise be available for public use and enjoyment. Squatters have gained a financial advantage through illegal actions as they have not purchased and do not pay rental to the Crown or Local Authority.

Demand for Services

- Squatter settlements have grown unchecked thereby creating need for the provision of public utility services.

Non Compliance

- The shacks do not comply with Building Codes, other Acts and Regulations and create a "double standard" for the local authorities.

**Implementation of Policy**

UDIA supports the implementation strategies of the Squatter Policy which proposes, amongst others, the creation and management of reserves for squatter occupation; the removal and site rehabilitation at the end of the six year program; registration of shacks; no further construction; relocation of professional fishers to an appropriate area of the reserve which they can lease.

UDIA also supports the Master Plan for Wedge and Grey which recommends a range of nature-based recreation and tourism opportunities that can be developed in an ecologically sustainable manner. The Shire of Dandaragan has demonstrated that the objectives of the Master Plan can be implemented in a manner that is acceptable to the broader community and the State Government. The 2007 WAPC award for Local Government Excellence in Coastal Planning and Management is a clear endorsement of the merit of the Master Plan and the application of relevant policy. Modification of the policy will inevitably result in lesser outcomes for the environment and the

community and defies the equitable application of existing policy which has at its core the sustainable development of Crown Land. UDIA requests that the Minister reconsider the decision to review shack sites in Western Australia and that the Minister respects the existing State and Local Government policy environment pertaining to Wedge and Grey.

### **Conclusion**

The future of shack sites at Wedge and Grey is accounted for in established policy that seeks to improve environmental, social and economic outcomes for the people of Western Australia. UDIA supports the equitable and consistent application of planning and environmental policies and requests that the Minister for the Environment reconsider the decision to review the existing policy which has proven commendable outcomes.

I trust that you will give these comments due consideration and I thank you again for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely

  
**Debra Goostrey**  
Chief Executive Officer