

Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs: Proposed Capital City of Perth Legislation

There is a strong case for the City of Perth having its own legislation and appropriate governance powers with respect to planning, managing business enterprises, reporting and transparency. However the 515 signatories to **Petition No 90 - Proposed Capital City of Perth Legislation**, who are of all political persuasions and have concerns for the various areas affected by City of Perth Bill, urge the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs to recommend the rejection of the Bill and its total redrafting.

The concerns of the signatories are as follows:

1. The proposals contain no tangible plans for making Perth a pre-eminent "Capital City", either in character or appearance. As a Capital City, it must be a great place to visit, live and work. It must have a strong local identity and a special sense of place that distinguishes it from the other capital cities in Australia and our neighbouring Indian Ocean countries. It needs to provide a unique and outstanding mix of tourism, cultural, heritage, lifestyle, recreational, entertainment, civic and business activities for residents, out-of-town visitors, and workers alike. It also needs an efficient public transit system and to be free of heavy traffic congestion.
2. The City of Perth Bill now before Parliament is not fit for any of the above purposes. It is little more than a series of unjustified boundary changes on a map; a set of proposals for the unwarranted and undemocratic expansion of the existing City of Perth into Vincent, Nedlands, Subiaco and presumably, over time Victoria Park (Burswood).
3. The Bill has all the signs of having been developed in haste without close consultation with the surrounding local governments and stakeholders other than the City of Perth, UWA and QEII Medical Centre and careful consideration of the priorities in and ramifications of the proposals.
4. The proposal that the City of Perth Committee should be chaired by the Premier, supported by the Minister for Local Government and the CEO of the Department of Local Government would constrain the City's status and capacity to achieve a balance of sectional interests and serve the best interests of both the City and Western Australia. A capital city, as a municipality with a pre-eminent role in the State, must have the right to self-government and the exercise of public responsibilities by democratically constituted authorities in conformity with its charter.
5. At a time when the budget deficit is forecast to hit \$2.7 billion in the next financial year and the state debt to climb beyond \$36 billion by 2018 and there is pressure on the public sector to contain spending, it is irresponsible to put forward this proposal without any evidence of diligence in working out the implementation costs, cost benefits, saving and direct benefits to the people of WA and capacity to meet these costs. Already, in anticipation of the introduction of the capital city legislation, the City of Perth is announcing the creation of up to 80 new positions.
6. It is argued that UWA and QEII should be in the City of Perth. On what grounds? UWA is the University of Western Australia, not the University of Perth (or is it planned to change its name?) and how does its location affect its status or attraction for faculty and students? Yale is a world-famous, highly prestigious university, and it is located in New Haven, Connecticut, a port city 120 kilometres northeast of New York City. Harvard is in the municipality of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 5 km from the City of Boston. The fact that the main UWA campus is mainly in the City of Subiaco and like Harvard, 5km from the CBD, has never previously led to any difficulties. The University pays no rates and submits no planning applications to the local council (determination of the applications being the responsibility of the Western Australian Planning Commission). So it is difficult to understand why the current local government boundaries should

now be seen as logistically, financially, or operationally detrimental to the University or to QEII. And will the inclusion of QEII enable any quicker access, cost benefits or better care for patients?

7. There must be grave concerns over the proposal to bring Kings Park within the boundaries of the City of Perth. This would effectively remove it from operating in accord with the Parks and Reserves Amendment Act (1954) which was specifically introduced to prevent any development or leasing of the whole or any part of the park. Kings Park is a Perth icon, but so are the Swan River and the metropolitan beaches and it is not proposed that the Perth boundaries should encompass these. The public is also mindful of the fact that the State Government has already appropriated one major Class A Reserve and place of commemoration for all those who gave their lives for their country to build a commercial development on the Perth Waterfront of questionable architectural and recreational value.
8. Despite the Premier and Minister of Local Government's attempts to force the amalgamation of local councils and disregard for the Dadour Poll Provisions, further attempts are now being made to force residents into another jurisdiction and disallow polls on the grounds that Dadour only applies to amalgamations. Dr Dadour, in representing the electorate of Subiaco, stated, "Since the introduction of the Local Government Act of 1960 [Subiaco] has been under threat of being taken over by the City of Perth or by the City of Nedlands. [It] always had a dark cloud hanging over it and as a result it could not function properly because it did not know what the next day may bring." History is repeating itself.
9. We believe that there is a strong case for scrapping the current legislation and starting again. The vision, goals, powers and governance of the Capital City have to be assessed, the stakeholders need be consulted and a strong incontestable business case has to be provided. Dr Dadour argued that his Bill "represents true democracy and as long as we pass it, the people will be most grateful." He took the issue to an election and increased his majority. The Premier should be encouraged to take his proposals for the City of Perth to the electorate, clearly detailing the costs, benefits and ramifications, and seek a mandate for his concept.

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~~Ken Eastwood AM~~