

Catherine Hutchesson MP

MEMBER FOR WAITE



Expert Panel
Planning System Implementation Review
GPO Box 1815
Adelaide SA 5001

By email: DTI.PlanningReview@sa.gov.au

Dear Expert Panel,

This submission is authorised by Catherine Hutchesson MP, Member for Waite. It is a collation of Waite constituents views and feedback on the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* which have been directly provided to the Member for Waite or the Member's office.

Tree Protection

There is general consensus from the Waite community that there should be provisions for greater protection of native vegetation in the new Planning and Design Code, particularly relating to significant trees. Our community places a high value on the quantity of trees in the electorate, with special connections to endemic trees such as the Grey Box and established eucalyptuses. People in our area recognise the habitat value that these trees have, especially in relation to Waite's vulnerable fauna such as the Southern-Brown Bandicoot or Square-Tailed Kite. There is also understanding of the pre-European tree's and ecological zone's (such as the Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of South-eastern Australia) significance and relationship to Aboriginal culture. This particularly relates to the Kaurna and Peramangk connection to these ecological systems for tens of thousands of years. The climate resilience benefit from the quantity of significant native trees in our area is also well-known, where the trees reduce the Urban Heat Island Effect and protect people and property from harmful effects of natural disasters. They also understand trees are an effective carbon sink and are of high value in climate mitigation.

For these reasons, the Waite community overwhelmingly desires greater protections for trees. Residents are witnessing current tree canopy destruction, especially in the Mitcham Hills, and are highly concerned of the impact on the area's character. They see the cause of this being relaxed tree clearing rules, particularly in relation to trees' proximity to dwellings and other property landmarks. Some examples are the 10-metre rule tree clearing in proximity to homes and the 20-metre rule in medium and high-risk bushfire overlays under the *Planning, Development, and Infrastructure (General) Regulations 2017*. There is also concern regarding the 10-metre rules ability to be triggered in development consent when relating to a trees proximity to a building on an adjacent property. This is also the case in relation to developments where the location of the building is moved for the purpose of widening the removal exemption area. There is also a desire to widen the definition of a regulated tree to better reflect the wide variety of trees that provide ecosystem services to our community and native fauna.



Some have also commented on Government department's ability to bypass particular tree protection regulations, and the potential impacts this could have on Waite ecological communities. Concerns have also been raised regarding the ability for Authorised Officers to enforce rules regarding tree clearing due to their limitations in entering private property and resources. As such, comments have been made regarding the consequences of some developments clearing the trees before development approval is granted and the possible solution of increasing council power in relation to tree protection enforcement.

It has also been raised that there should be improved provision for recognising the value and ecosystem services provided by trees. This includes better education for communities on their benefits to native fauna and in climate resilience, as well as in bushfire protection. It has also been commented that tree removal offsetting schemes should factor in all ecosystem services, including both use and non-use values. Consequently, it is suggested that offsetting provisions are based on scientific understandings of the characteristics needed to replace trees, whether relating to specific trees or green space value. This should also be factored into the cost of offsetting funds for tree removals, as trees generate significant carbon removal values well beyond current monetary. Carbon credits for keeping significant trees have also been suggested.

Community

Residents, particularly in the Mitcham Hills region of our electorate, place high regard on preserving the 'village' aspect of our community. There have been high quantities of correspondence to me encouraging the greening of Waite, particularly along main roads to encourage people's connection with nature and to broaden the enclosed feel of our community. Constituents have also suggested the extension of green space and large-tree planting mandates on new properties to preserve our community's green character. This theme is continued with the high desire for enhancement and growth of open public green spaces in use for all ecosystem services. It is said that these spaces deserve high degrees of protections from development, and it would have positive externalities to encourage community maintenance of these lands, such as through initiatives like community gardens to further create a 'biophilic city'. Public transport connectivity to town hubs has also been raised, especially better provisions for 'Park'n'Rides' and other connectivity methods for people travelling between home, shopping hubs, community centres and public transport outlets. Pedestrian and bike access around and between communities is also encouraged with demand for more bike paths and footpaths, with increased provisions for active transport over traditional transport to assist reducing transport disadvantage, as well as improving health and community feel.

Building

Housing energy efficiency has been the most commonly raised issue relating to new builds. There is widespread consensus that high energy efficient requirements should be enforced on new homes. This will reduce energy usage and thus the carbon footprint from houses, while also decreasing power bills. It also has a general climate mitigative and adaptive effect when properties are planned in a climate and water sensitive manner. This includes the use of lighter coloured roofs to increase the roofs' albedo to greater reflect solar radiation. There is also understanding of native trees ecological benefits over introduced trees, and the importance of encouraging new home builders to plant endemic species over introduced. The sentiment to preserve heritage, as well as ecosystems, is also high with many requesting higher levels of protections for heritage buildings and land. Likewise, people want to maintain a high standard in preserving neighbour character, as to place a higher standard of approval on new development in a special character zoned area. Subsequently, the community generally desires wider provisions for community consultation when development approval is sought, especially when it has the potential to impact this character. It is argued this will safeguard new developments impacting the existing landscape and character of a neighbourhood.

I hope that you will take my constituents' feedback and ideas regarding the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* into consideration. If you would like any further information regarding these matters, please contact my office by phone on 8278 5844, or email waite@parliament.sa.gov.au.

Kind regards



Catherine Hutchesson MP
Member for Waite

16 December 2022