

DIT:Planning Reform Submissions

From: Ruth Wass [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 18 December 2020 5:21 PM
To: DIT:Planning Reform Submissions
Subject: Neighbourhood consultation - Planning reform submissions 2020
Attachments: govt Planning and Design Code 17 December 2020 SAPlanning.docx

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
The Director of SA
Dear Sir or Madam

I have attached a copy of letter sent to Jayne Stinson, Member for Badcoe, as part of a response to Neighbourhood Submissions to the Planning Laws Reforms.
I hope you will take into account my concerns, and those of the many others who feel as I do.

Cheers
Ruth Wass, CPA (ret), DipT, BEc, BCom (Adel)

I can be contacted on [REDACTED] My email address is [REDACTED]

**BELOW IS A LETTER SENT TO JAYNE STINSON, MEMBER FOR BADCOE IN RESPONSE TO HER
NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATION RE PLANNING LAWS**

17 December 2020

Jayne Stinson MP
Member for Badcoe
PLYMPTON SA 5038

Dear Jayne

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views on the new local planning laws proposed by the current Government in South Australia, led by Stephen Marshall.

It is a matter of great concern to me. Regrettably it was first commenced by John Rau of the Labor Government within the last ten years, and it impacted on us directly in our new home, having shifted from Dernancourt about eleven years ago. One reason for that shift from Dernancourt was six two storey townhouses built on a large spacious previously greened property next door, with the balconies of four of them overlooking our backyard, totally destroying our privacy, with beautiful trees on the border just a memory.

Our house at Kurralta Park looked like a safe haven after that. An established home, private, views over Brownhill Creek and reserve, abundant with trees, lawns and native birds, established houses next door with lawn and room for children to play, set back from fence lines.

Five years ago that changed under the previous government's planning laws.

Now across our back fence a solid two storey 'warehouse' grey wall, towering over us, right on the fenceline, with no opportunity in large parts to screen it off with any greenery. Four angular prison cells, wide enough only for door and very narrow driveway, with a joke of a garage for one car, provided it is not a SUV or 4WD, and one actually wants to be able to open the doors and get out, given there is no other storage space on the property for associated 'stuff' which lives in garages.

It's a joke.

We watched them being built.

But first, the rape and destruction of the green –the lawn, the garden, the native trees where lived the finches, the heart-rending destruction of a street native tree, where again the lorikeets lived and fed, to make way for one of four driveways. Where once there was plenty of onsite parking, with little or no parking in the street, now nothing but violent gashes in the earth filled with concrete, and of course no onsite or street parking spaces because of the multiple driveways. So now they park their utes and cars opposite in front of the reserve. Of course, these supposed two-car townhouses are, in fact, one car residences – no room in the garages, just one in the little strip of land in front. And of course, in the back, where once was lawn and trees and large shed, just an envelope-sized patch, no room for trees, not even sure if there is any lawn, I suspect not.

And the construction. That left a lot to be desired. Within the first twelve months after their completion, there have been numerous visits by plumbers and construction workers to repair the damage from rain through the houses, and rebuild new gutter systems.

We watched as sheets of plasterboard and insulation were nailed to frail timber frames. Then, on the top storey, cement board formed the outer wall. On the bottom storey only, equally thin panels of imported cement external walls, heeble board, thin enough to be damaged by relatively small knock. Waterproofing was by means of wall rendering which did not cover all the surfaces! These pallets of heeble board were wrapped in plastic, which of course, ended up in the waste bins. Mounds and mounds of them. Single use plastic – surely an environmental hazard. Importation – adding to the carbon footprint of the house.

We have spent hundreds of dollars buying large trees, and hedges to try to screen off this eyesore, wherever possible, across our not very large backyard. We never see the afternoon sun in winter after about two o'clock, and certainly never anything resembling the hues of a sunset sky in the evening, just a grey prison block.

And the disease has spread along the street and throughout the suburb. Thirteen prison cell blocks on two/three house blocks. Thirty or so on another block, right on a major intersection. No room in the front yard for trees, no room on site for the cars, and now no room in the streets to drive safely along, particularly along bus routes.

That is bad enough.

Those planning laws destroyed the character of the area, lovely bungalow homes razed, green disappeared, just grey, white angular boxes.

And councils have failed to protect us against this violation. Street trees disappear. Maybe some replaced by ornamental trinkets. No attempt to create green areas in the midst of these eruptions. West Torrens Council already has a poor record of greening in the area with their coverage reducing recently, and it's getting worse. They have ignored their responsibility of stormwater runoff, which will lead to flooding along the Brownhill Creek.

And for what?

Long term planning for the future,. they say. Jam all the people into little boxes, don't give the children room to play, coop them up in their airconditioned cells. And cause havoc and near and not-so-near misses on the streets with congested parking of cars which should be onsite.

That is bad enough. **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. STOP NOW BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE**

But no, this Government has some more long term goals for its planning laws. Now they want us to live with **70 residences on the equivalent of 16 quarter-acre house blocks** (a hectare I believe). **That's an area 8 houses long, and two deep, back to back along two streets. 70 residences where there were 16. That's roughly four residences on every quarter-acre block. On every hectare, on every street, in every suburb. It is so scary to even contemplate.**

And the long term goal? Have they really thought that through?

The long term goal will be very different to the long term result.....

EXTINCTION

Have we learned nothing from science? Have we learned nothing from our forefathers.

Consider the colonisation of South Australia in 1836. The settlers came in, spread out along the coast and cleared the land and trees for grazing and crops. Then they moved inland and cleared the land for grazing and crops, adding potent fertilisers. . The result, soil erosion, soil degradation, dust storms, water pollution and rising temperatures. **They didn't know at the time that they were contributing to South Australia's long term rising temperatures, Some recognised the environment impact.** One chap in Broken Hill about 1930 was instrumental in planting thousands of native trees and shrubs around the city where once trees stood but which had been chopped down by locals and mining companies. The overwhelming dust storms were minimised.

But the early settlers understood the weather better than we do. They knew that if they built a homestead or house with a verandah around the house then the house would be cooler. And if they built them with solid brick or stone, they could keep out the heat. And if they planted trees and plants, then there was shade for cooling and a home for the birds and bees, such essential parts of the ecosystem as they dropped seeds for new trees in new areas, or pollinated fruit trees.

But we haven't learned from them.

In many cases no eaves, no significant overhangs, no shade, and paperthin walls on these legoland homes. But of course, just turn the airconditioner on! Day and night. Yes, we abuse our resources because we cannot plan properly.

The house we moved into had shrubs down one side, a cracked pool at the back and a few straggly trees at the front. We now cool our house in summer with overhanging ornamental vines which then let the sun in over winter. We have planted many native trees and flowers where native birds nest and feed, and bees take the pollen. We have fruit trees in the back, and enough lawn for the grandchildren to shoot a hoop and to cool the yard. We rarely need our airconditioner in summer, just fans. And winter, just a heater in the evenings. Nothing dramatic, just what we call sensible planning, with a healthy respect for the environment.

But of course we are pestered constantly by some developer who wants to knock it down and destroy our little patch of green and life and replace it with hot, sterile concrete with no thought for the environment, or the amity of the neighbourhood.

EXTINCTION

What will our children and grandchildren remember about the term of office of the Marshall Government? Will that be the extinction of the environment in Adelaide? Will it be the rapid rise in the temperature of Adelaide to an unbearable limit? Will it be flooding due to excessive stormwater runoff?

LISTEN TO THE SCIENCE

There is enough out there warning us of the dangers of concretisation of our cities. How much has the average temperature risen in South Australia over the past few years? The importance of trees, lawns, natural shading to absorb carbon dioxide and reduce this planet-destroying overheating is well known. Scientists, gardeners and environmentalists, Sir David Attenborough for

one, are pleading with us to take this situation seriously. Are we too egotistical to listen to those who actually know?

It's not enough just to say the Federal Government needs to reduce emissions. **It is OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PLAY OUR PART.**

WHO OWNS THE RESPONSIBILITY?

The Developers for a start. With their constant lobbying, financial contribution to political parties and pressure on governments, to 'Infill' the suburbs, it would seem that they show little respect or regard for the climate and their part in the responsibility for the earth's temperature rising. It would seem that the acquisition of money is their only consideration, just like the early colonists who destroyed much of the land and tree cover so they could make money from crops and animals. Is every property they develop carbon neutral? This includes use of sea transport of imported heeble blocks and the plastic wastage. And it includes the constant use of airconditioners and power production.

The Governments. Pressured by developers and blackmailed by their financial benefits, the governments have a short-sighted approach to the very large picture, although they proclaim it is all about future planning. **Responsible future planning would and should take a very different direction.** I notice that the Victorian Government's future planning aims for a 30% greening, which it seems is greater than the percentage of the existing upmarket leafy green suburbs. How about we plan for something responsible like that.

And the Councils – bound by State laws in many regards they are unable to overrule the irresponsible planning laws. I do observe however that many of the eastern suburbs of Adelaide do not seem to be suffering the same fate as those to the north and west. Do those Councils have more regard for their resident's views or have a better greening policy? Or are Councils only interested in increased Rate revenue?

So back to the Developers. Now they have what they want, they are like hyenas or vultures, pouncing on every home that may be a little old or run down, or even just up for sale, tearing them apart and leaving the bare bones and remnants as a blight on the earth. And they get what they want. Their greed leaves a trail of disaster behind.

And the Residents? Helpless, no opportunity to protest against these two or three storey 'concentration camps'/'warehouses'/'factories'. And they are not even priced at a reasonable price for a family with children, or new immigrants to purchase. So how does the planning for our future enlarged population, presumably from immigration, match the lack of accessibility for those very people into those residences. And how realistic and practical are two storey apartments for an ageing population! Again, I ask how deep is the Government really thinking.

It is a stated fact in the real estate world that the homes which sell the quickest are those single storey, two per block, rather than the two-storey townhouses which have a very limited market. So why keep building them? Surely by building the single storey residences, which often have a larger front area for parking and garden, and more serviceable for the ageing and the immigrant families, we can accommodate our increasing population. And all with a sense of responsibility towards the environment and our heating planet. We may avoid EXTINCTION.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY.

So what are some ways that the stakeholders can shoulder their responsibility?

LISTEN TO THE SCIENCE in planning with regard to the environment, greening, use of limited resources, disposal of waste and the supply and demand aspect of housing.

- Demand: Will all those students come back to Adelaide in the future, given the current international political situation.
- Are we building residences that are superfluous to our actual needs?
- Supply: Do we not already have empty apartments in the city?
- Are we building homes actually accessible or suitable to emigrants or an ageing population.
- Are we building homes with a green component which allow rainwater to soak into the water table, or are we channelling it all off concrete patches into pipes into the stormwater system to run to sea.

IMPLEMENT THE SCIENCE by refusing to be 'blackmailed' by the developers, rather considering the damage done to our land in the past and ensuring it will not happen again.

- Ensure that all new projects have a minimum, say, 30% green area, and adequate native trees are planted on the property and some lawn.
- Ensure that they are set back from the street sufficiently, so that it can accommodate two cars apart from the garage and sufficient green to allow for rainwater to reach the watertable.
- Or ensure that every residence has a special purpose built shed to store all other non-vehicle goods, so there IS room for two vehicles.
- Ensure that number of driveways are limited on each block of land, using communal parking areas or single entrances to the group of residences.
- Ensure that street greening is not reduced by the need for multiple driveways (see above)
- Ensure that the materials used are environmentally friendly (waste-wise), (and transport-wise) and construction for heating/cooling minimises use of air-conditioners.

And then check the BOTTOM LINE

I see the death of a child in UK has been attributed to air pollution. Now Governments will need to think about possible **LITIGATION** with regard to their failure to provide a healthy environment.

- Maybe NOW there will be cases claiming that Governments have allowed their cities to overheat by failure to prevent the causes of that overheating.
- Or maybe there may be, for example, cases of children being accidentally killed in streets jammed with parked cars and traffic because Governments and Councils have actually **CREATED** this dangerous situation.
- Or litigation against Governments for allowing Developers to build sub-standard buildings, resulting in collapse or fear of collapse.

It's starting to get expensive for Governments, Councils and Developers.

THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

I am a retired CPA Accountant. One thing I learnt about was the TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE. Not the line which shows the actual financial situation, money in, money out, or even the next line down which shows adjustments, write-downs etc.

No, the TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE. This line which regrettably so few companies or organisations consider in their planning and spending. It is the line which represents, among other things, the **cost to the environment and remediation of the environment.** The mining company, for example, has to allow for remediation costs at the completion of their mining project. And so on.

Laws need to come in to insist that initially:

- Developers need to show that they are building in these costs in their budgets and financial statements, and are cognisant of the costs of possible remediation, and are contributing financially to the carbon offsets needed to meet our emissions targets.
- And maybe the Government needs to set up Trust Funds made up of contributions by these Developers, the Government itself and Councils. It would serve as a source of funding, first for carbon offsets, then for environmental or physical damage or litigation caused by the building projects and associated affects.

Let's hope it is an incentive to these stakeholders to 'lift their game', take on responsibility and think for the future. These litigations could include anything resulting from poor materials, workmanship, traffic congestion and rising temperatures. All these are within the gamut of Government and Council planning laws and regulations. **So the buck stops with those who draft up these policies.**

And the PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY

Councils and Governments need to strictly enforce the improved laws and regulations to ensure that EXTINCTION does not occur, now or in the future. And life in the cities and suburbs should be amenable to their residents.

In particular, I think of **Traffic Congestion**, brought about not by more cars but solely by inadequate parking facilities on residences.

Penalties should exist for planning regulations which do not provide adequate car parking space on site. For example, as a basic requirement, two spaces should exist on the site, separate to the 'garage' which is mostly no more than a storeroom.

So **require sufficient room** for an extra shed or storeroom on the property so the garage is vacant. This would be done by reducing the floor footprint of the apartment/townhouse.

Currently, those advertised as two-car parking are in fact one-car parking. So start **fining the cars parked in the street.** Get them to clear their storerooms and use that as a park. Insist that they obtain a shed for that purpose. (Send the Shed Police around!!!) If renting, the landlords will need to provide these. If new ones, the Developer will need to build the 'shed'.

Then there will be room for two cars on the premises, and tenants or occupiers will need to comply with those requirements. They will need to park two cars on the premises. Vehicles left in the street will suffer a fine or a Tow-away.

It won't be a popular regulation, but we all suffer from the congestion and we would all benefit from improved road access. The cause needs to be eliminated for safe travel and litigation avoidance.

LOOKING BACK and LOOKING FORWARD

I look at the old cream-brick two- or three-storey flats on or near Anzac Highway. And I see that these places 'work'. They work because they are on large blocks of land, they have trees and often a large green area in the centre, and generally they have only one entry/exit from the site. They have probably double brick walls, being built about the 60s and 70s, and very much served the needs of couples, overseas folk on short term visas, or singles. They work! The land is not taken up with driveways. And they are not an affront to the community or the environment. **Learn from them.**

Another site which is highly commendable is at the Montacute/St Bernard's Road intersection. Again, built about the 70s or 80s, spaced small blocks of units, two or three bedrooms, good sized living area, and with communal car parking shelters serving each block of units throughout the complex. The whole area has fitted in between native trees which provide shade and cooling. There is car parking for visitors. It works. There is no parking in the street. Just two, maybe three, entrances/exits along the whole corner frontages on the busy roads. The units were, and probably still are, highly desirable. Again they are not an affront against the environment. **Learn from them**

Look at some other blocks of units or apartments, **one just off Henley Beach Road**, one entry/exit, lovely gardens, large grassed area, communal parking near each group of units. Brick walls. Varying age groups living in them. **Learn from them.**

And the **retirement villages, for example the Pines** on Marion Road. A huge complex, but only maybe three entrances off the three streets it fronts and backs onto. Good wide roadways servicing the units, with wide driveways, plus large garage for each unit. **Learn from them.**

Rethink the process. Rather than allowing a lot of haphazard purchase of blocks by developers and then jamming as many boxes on it with no room for anything including cars or garden, look at similar projects, requiring multiple blocks and then **planning the homes/units with wisdom and forethought and an eye for subtlety, and regard to the environment.** If the population is ageing, such a scheme is highly desirable as a downsizing and affordable option.

I hope my thoughts go some way towards supporting your Neighbourhood Concerns which you are presenting to the Government.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I really hope that they listen to you.

Cheers

Ruth Wass, BEc, BCom, CPA

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CC West Torrens Council, Mayor Coxon & Planning Department