

Development Alert - A critical Independent Review, Peel- Harvey, Mandurah Region. By Peter H Forrest

Introduction

This Review Paper was written (*originally in 2011*) following considerable investigation, from an **independent community viewpoint**. It includes both detailed commentary and proposals for constructive improvement in the way urban development occurs and is managed on behalf of the community. Although set as a case-study in the context of the southern sector of what is now regarded as the Perth Region, **the analysis and conclusions – as commentary on the existing Planning System methodology in WA, are applicable throughout the Perth Region.**

In particular, they are evidence that the track record of successive State Governments and their relevant Agencies is one of failure to properly relate future Planning to changing social circumstances and to land surface topography that varies substantially throughout this Region. It is **the people of WA** who are both the consumers of these services and those who pay for them through rates and taxes – for the future, **in 2015 they deserve better.**

Purposes.-

The background was the Peel Region being included by the WA Planning Commission into an expanding Metropolitan City of Perth in its "Directions 2031" future Planning concept (2010).

Urban development had however, already commenced in built-form, to eventually surround the Peel-Harvey Estuary, and with obvious completely inadequate preparatory scientific evaluation of the suitability of much of the estuarine Region for urban development of the type and scale envisaged.

It became clear to numerous informed Community and Consultative Groups, some of them partially Government-funded, that this 'framework' Planning was then being followed rapidly with approvals for Developer-driven site clearance (for more and 'conventional' urban sprawl) but proceeding largely in Managerial ignorance of distinctive features and understanding of the sustainability of the actual terrain to accommodate this.

*The purpose of the Paper was to detail and explain the issues of concern and to alert the current State Government that there are **serious immediate future sustainability problems concerning development of the Peel Region that must be confronted** and better managed without delay, to avoid **disastrous consequences** to the future **health and economy** of this Region and to an incoming population.*

Several related problems that have arisen directly from.-

- **The recent more aggressive pace of urban development and failure of the parties involved to commission independent research to properly understand the existing complex land surface characteristics and condition before development occurs.**
- **Failure to adequately coordinate, managerially, the necessarily interactive operational input of various Government Agencies, to sensibly evaluate what development would actually be sustainable – and before project approvals were given.**

- **Failure of collective responsibility by Public Service Agencies, supposed to be acting on behalf of the Community at large, to collectively respond in appropriate practical terms to urban development proposals set against the unique characteristics of this Region.**
- **The current State Government and its Departmental Agencies must face the fact that even before commencement of this massive new peripheral urban development, that is now proceeding apace, the Peel- Harvey Estuary was well-known to be in declining condition. Hardly any research has been funded to directly support remedial action and that alone could completely invalidate future development plans to extend Metropolitan Perth into the Peel Region.**

(A significant point addressed to the State Government via this paper was that State-wide Community Futures planning is in fact a cross-portfolio concern and since the outcomes have a profound and direct effect in shaping, positively or negatively, all aspects of future Community life, all Cabinet Ministers should feel that they have some role via their Departments in that?).

Essential facts illustrating the scale and complexity of problems.-

FACT 1. A major recent focus has been a Government-endorsed document by the WA Planning Commission (WAPC) entitled 'Directions 2031 a Draft Spatial Framework for Perth and Peel'. The Plan however contains only what the title conveys, namely "Spatial" analysis and a "Framework" of intentions. The Planning Minister's 'Vision' foreword to that document and the follow-up document 'Beyond the Horizon' includes - *"Our challenge is to find room for this new growth **while preserving our unique local environments and valued quality of life**".*

Recent Project approval policy, as being applied in the **Peel Region** now, does not reflect the required professional input from all relevant Departments in respect of the Peel Region and will not, on the basis of current evidence, **support that optimistic vision.**

FACT 2. While this 'Directions 2031' framework may be laudable macro strategy at a level of generality, there is a sense of idealistic unreality about it; lacking understanding of actual local conditions, at least in the Peel Region. Implementation planning that controls development on-site, in such a unique location, requires far more independent research and evaluation of land condition and tolerance. The next step should have been a **Comprehensive Environmentally Researched implementation Plan for delivery of urban development in the Peel Region**, prepared collaboratively with other Government Departments and Agencies. However, the WAPC has bypassed independent practical sustainability analysis in Peel and very recently gone on to approve large scale urban development in the Region in the context of Directions 2031, **without that essential further research** verification about the land tolerance to survive the form and locations for it.

(There is apparently a serious gap in comprehension at the root of this action, namely the false assumption that WAPC either currently has, or has access to, sufficient researched data to give reliable guidance on sustainable land-use in the particular conditions of the Peel Region. Other Government-funded Agencies and Community Groups have repeatedly warned that it does not yet exist; have sought and been denied urgent funding for it; and now the State Government must confront well founded criticism and unpalatable consequences.)

FACT 3. A study of even the very limited data available would have revealed that sustainable land use in the Peel Region in many localities has **already exceeded tolerance levels and deterioration is continuing** (and will obviously be accelerated by urban development). Formal reports commissioned (by State Government) via e.g. Environmental, Water and Agriculture Agencies, have repeatedly confirmed this. Research to properly verify causes and effects has not yet been undertaken. Optimism and 'guesswork' by Planning decision makers is putting the future Community welfare at risk. There is no valid excuse for this omission.

Holistic Environmental Planning for operational realisation of built environment must have a foundation on detailed research-based site-analysis concerning all aspects of land surface, associated local natural processes and ecology. The informed local Community groups and Government sub-Agencies that operate in the Region **are aware and alarmed** that this has not been done. Substantial Development has **recently** been approved e.g. in the Murray Shire locality, in the absence of both vital independently derived data and sensible delivery co-ordination between responsible Government Agencies, neglecting the actual future capacity of the sites to sustain it. i.e.-

FACT 4. The central topographical feature of the Peel Region is the **Peel- Harvey Estuary** and, as stated above, approved development is currently proceeding **all around and close to it**. However, this Estuary has been for many years known to be in serious distress and despite major attempts to try to alleviate the decline by empirical experiments, such as the Dawesville Cut, little actual progress has been made on recovery - **directly attributable to lack of adequate convergent and locally-based scientific research**.

FACT 5. It must be understood that **this Estuary drains a vast area** of almost flat land **stretching up to 50 kms north and north east, even outside of the Peel Region towards metropolitan Perth** and via the Serpentine River. Lower reaches of that River however, according to evidence from limited independent scientific research, are already **'ecologically dead'**, as **also** are the lower parts of the Murray River as it enters the Estuary. The Estuary itself is therefore at **high risk of terminal decline**. Urban development that has recently been **approved** (in all those northerly areas also), is therefore significantly **increasing that risk, with no recovery plan or measures yet in place**.

FACT 6. It **should have been discovered by the WAPC** and State Government in general, **but apparently has not**, that the overall Community cost of urban Development in this locality must be inevitably **loaded** with an unusually **high expenditure premium** associated with the **need to thoroughly recycle all water (residential, commercial, industrial effluent and surface run-off from roofs, roads and gardens); before any of that is allowed to percolate through to the Peel Harvey Estuary**. That is as stated above, because the Estuary receives all drainage from most of the Region and **cannot tolerate further** pollution without deteriorating even further and faster. Twin pipe systems and independent purifications plants are therefore essential for each new Development and the cost of these will be a substantial impost on the Community. The means of **cost-recovery** for this should involve development premiums and specific **Community consultation**.

FACT 7. The **current forms and spread** of Urban Development in the Region, recently approved or sanctioned by the WAPC is therefore most **likely to result in early destruction of the Estuary for the traditional Recreational uses that are highly valued by the Community of WA**. This will be due to further accelerating decline in water quality, that will result in disappearance of crustaceans (e.g. crab), fish and other valued associated estuarine species. Furthermore, this Estuary is **supposed to be protected** by the State and Federal Governments as a wildlife reserve under International Treaty

(Ramsar). But neither State nor Federal Governments actually today have enough sound information available to them, to be assured that they can actually comply with that protection Treaty. In the eyes of the Community, the **Estuary has long been and should remain a significant recreation zone** for crabbing, fishing, wild-life appreciation, accessible by canoe and other shallow-draught water craft.

Public planning machinery in WA with regard to the Peel Region.-

The WAPC/DOP (Department of Planning) has done 'Spatial Planning' . i.e.- Flat plan two-dimensional 'broad brush' **land-use strategic Framework planning**, as in their 'Directions 2031' paper. *[In **summary** that 'Directions 2031' paper -is essentially based on their evaluation of demographic requirements for substantial population growth in the Region and related land requirements. These are brought to focus to recommend the expansion of the City of Perth through a series of 6 sub-regional areas, an outlying one of which is Peel. Various essential contextual themes are outlined in the document and the preferred option to describe the overall conceptual intent being a 'Connected City.' That Paper then expresses overall preferred policy intentions].*

The WAPC however, draws attention to the 'top-down' concept of this paper by repeatedly stating that this framework "WILL INFORM" ... what happens locally. But this is really little more than optimistic wishful thinking, because it does not actually consider topographical conditions within Regions. The WAPC is too remote from local Community interaction, detailed site assessment and realisation issues. In practice it has been delegating responsibility to Local Authority Councils (most of whom have few professional urban design planners and a narrow available skills range) and the outcomes have been frequently ad hoc, uncoordinated and qualitatively disappointing, both socially and visually.

Where expertise is required to assess environmental impacts, which is almost always the case, Local Councils refer the actual proposals received from private sector Developers, to the DEC and EPA. However, **the DEC and EPA in turn do not actually have an adequate research base for this Peel Region to do other than respond in very general and speculative terms.** While they may suspect that there are significant long-term sustainability risks; **due to normal scientific protocol they will not willingly state anything that they do not have objectively-derived research evidence to support.** WAPC/ DOP will therefore, by neglect in this Region at least, in the above context be frequently condoning decisions that **exceed available competence** by continuing to delegate such approval authority. That must surely be irresponsible and **not in the public interest?**

It is therefore **recommended** (as explained later), on the basis of extensive current fact-finding in the Region, **that the Government should take urgent steps to act on this serious problem**, which is complex, urgent and cannot be resolved **without concerted attention by Ministers with their associated portfolio Agencies acting collectively to coordinate assessment, input and service delivery.**

FACT 8. Previous attempts in this Region to achieve some coordination have been feeble and in fact resulted in a profusion of Committees, Groups, Associations and Commissions, arising from conflicting perspectives and overlapping interests of State, Regional and Local Government Agencies. Departments have been timid about pressing their suspicions/ concerns about what the other is doing in the Region, **with no Regional independent check and balance overview** to collate and arbitrate the aggregated effects so as to achieve a balance of policy and delivery. There is no way that could be done by the

Department of Planning due to there being far **too many complex cross-disciplinary issues** (and the locally based WADP staff are in any case already over-stressed responding to Developer pressures). Neither is this a task for yet another consultative Committee; there are already far too many of them anyway, (even some existing in name only but actually inactive for several years) **with no direct functional delivery role and responsibility.**

ATTACHMENTS to this Paper explain, with supporting commentary, various associated troubling issues, as seen from a Community and Agencies perspective. The Paper however includes a major implementation - **RECOMMENDATION (11)** ('Organisation' -for detail see Appendix 4) that an immediately constructive initiative would be the formation of **a locally based 'Authority' with senior cross-departmental seconded staffing and delegated powers to ensure that Development proceeds, but under much more effective control – acting much more overtly in the collective public interest.**

ATTACHMENTS.-

APPENDIX 1. Investigation - facts and opinion from Agency Reports (p 6 -7)

APPENDIX 2. Analysis of organisation and current outcomes from a community perspective (p 8 -11)

APPENDIX 3. Review of current Planning processes against outcomes (p12 – 16)

APPENDIX 4. Summary - Context and Organisational Recommendation (p17 - 20)

APPENDIX 5. Planning of future development, proposed re-organisation (p21 -24)

LIST OF **RECOMMENDATIONS:-**

1. (p6) (Stakeholder advice)
2. (p8) (Proposal to integrate management)
3. (p8) (Recovery action)
4. (p9) (Re-construct planning system)
5. (p12) (Withdraw/ revise the 'Outline Development Plan' system)
6. (p13) (Limit some Local Authority powers)
7. (p14) (Re-write 'Liveable Neighbourhoods')
8. (p14) (Legislation, visual advertising)
9. (p15) (Centre for water excellence)
10. (p15) (Water institute)
11. (p16) (Draught limit for recreational boating) **see also note below ref. companion papers.*
12. (p18) (Organisation, proposed PEEL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY)
13. (p23) (Planning of Future Metropolitan Development)

(Disclosure: *The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the writer, who has no affiliation with any professional, commercial or industrial enterprise, political party, or community activist organisation.)*

Some readers may be interested in related papers by the same writer entitled –

** "The Environmental impact of increasing Boat access to the Peel-Harvey Estuary with particular reference to the effect of Hull type, draught and displacement." –*

** "Management of the Peel-Harvey Estuary and Regional Development."*

APPENDIX 1. Investigation – facts and opinion derived from Agency Reports.

Having investigated extensively, listened to many ‘stakeholders’ and reviewed a large volume of advisory and research reports pertaining to evaluation of both general and very specific aspects, **the original concerns have been found to be not only verified, but substantially increased.**- Many of the Reports reviewed **expressed repeated disappointment** that their previous recommendations had **not been heeded**, most found continuing deterioration - and all indicated a generally worsening situation - in the context of the types and pace of development now expected. A quotation from one Paper – typified the disillusionment as- **“consultation fatigue by Stakeholders”** !

Added to that, it must be recognised that the scale of recent government plans for development of this Region is neither known, nor the effects comprehended, **by the Community** in general. i.e. The outcome from Planning procedures and intentions, for which the WAPC is responsible, appear to be mutually inconsistent across this Region and the **process remote from and largely ‘opaque’ to citizens** – (and **even to other parallel Government Agencies**). Many of the Environmental and Water implications raised through wide-ranging studies and initial research findings have not apparently been heeded by WAPC and some other Government Departments.

The Peel-Harvey Estuary, which has long been highly valued by the Community of WA, is therefore under serious threat and certain to decline under this uncoordinated regime of different Agencies.

Recreational water use on the Estuary is unsustainable as currently controlled by Department of Transport. The distinctive natural Environment supposedly protected by International (Ramsar) Treaty, is continuing to be further debilitated, both under water and around its vital margins, by inadequately controlled use and peripheral urban development.

From experience of ‘trawling’ reports and findings - there are 3 types of constructively intentioned and knowledgeable ‘stakeholder’ advice, that are **RECOMMENDED (1)** to be very worthwhile for the Government to **please reconsider** and to **reference against** the perspectives available to Ministers, from their Departments.-

*1. Highly **site specific** and some documented scientific research projects (mainly in the fields of Water, Drainage and Conservation of natural ecosystems) i.e. from commissioned independent professional Research Companies and University Departments.*

*2. Aggregated **overview and commentary** arising from consultations and - commissioned projects - (notably by the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council) and -*

*3. Long-standing and historically **observed local ‘cause and effect’ experience** from dedicated voluntary Associations, that include both commercial operators and dedicated observers.*

The conclusion in light of the large scale urban expansion now being sanctioned in this Region (the sustainable effects of which are certainly not well understood by some Government Agencies, both State and Local) is that it is now most essential for Ministers to collectively implement a new executive initiative to -

a) Determinedly improve inter-Departmental communication and collaboration to achieve positive delivery outcomes in the Region, and -

b) Better communicate proposals to, and obtain feedback from, informed Agencies and Community Groups.

APPENDIX 2. Analysis of organisation and current outcomes, from a Community perspective.

The two main Local Government areas, Mandurah and Murray, aren't currently coordinated administratively at all. They operate under different Councils with different policies – and even appear to compete. The respective administrative territories are immediately adjacent, but spread on opposite sides of the valuable Peel-Harvey Estuary. Planning of urban development within the Region, for which consideration of impact on the Estuary is germane, should obviously at least be fully consistent at local level, irrespective of notional boundaries. It is currently, neither coordinated across the Region, or in respect of the Estuary. It is therefore **RECOMMENDED (2)** that immediate steps be taken to reorganise functional responsibilities, coalesce some and achieve fully integrated management in this Region.

Local Councils in this Region have not seriously addressed the sustainability issues of the Estuary and Developers appear to regard it superficially and conveniently as a 'water playground,' despite the fact that it is very, very shallow and any form of dredging is not scientifically defensible for sound ecological reasons. – For similar reasons, buildings and hard structures should be kept well away from this already exceptionally stressed water-body due to the basic common-sense principle of not further polluting water and consistent with maintaining the sustainability of surrounding natural wildlife and vegetation.

Canals/ harbours have been built or are currently proposed both sides of the Estuary, ignoring the inevitable further water quality deterioration and extension of toxicity. Developers have typically not been instructed on that and have consistently ignored experienced local community advice on the consequences. Comprehensive local applied research on this complex issue has neither been adequately encouraged nor supported by WAPC or successive State Governments. Consequently, and particularly in the context of Departmental and Government policies constantly today proclaiming 'sustainability' as policy for urban development, there is an unacceptable level of uncertainty concerning the effects of such Canal/ Harbour/ Marina development in this shallow Estuary.

Lower reaches of the Serpentine River and lower parts of the Murray River, according to scientific evaluation, are already dead ecologically (open sewer quality) yet still being built into and closely around – approved directly, or by delegated authority to Local Councils, from WAPC. That is despite there being a local office of the WADOP located in the Region. It is **RECOMMENDED (3)** that **Recovery action on water quality** be immediately implemented, beginning with the Commissioning of a programme of Research to develop feasible means, under the aegis of the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council.

Concerning management of planning, the Local authorities in the Region do not themselves undertake Creative residential Planning; they simply await Developers proposals and attempt to contain them to a Regulatory framework, (through delegated ODP powers from the WAPC). So far the results of this strategy are typified by a patchy development of sprawling, single-storey residential areas with miserably inadequate open space that is neither useful nor appreciated and with an inadequate network of community buildings and services. This result is a credit to no-one and this is an unsatisfactory method of achieving urban development.

An alternative, more creative and open approach involving the employment of a wider range of professional skills directly by the State Government, and revised executive planning policy as exemplified

*in some other countries, would achieve better overall management of urban development. The overall **community-cost**, whether professional planners are employed directly by the Government or by private developers by commissioning private practices, would not be higher but the Community would have more assurance of quality-control on the end results. - The delivery objective should be to create a cohesive assembly of visually attractive, socially inclusive neighbourhoods with a sufficiently broad range of services to create 'home' identities.*

*The primary objective of residential planning **should** be to create socially integrated, self-sustaining COMMUNITIES, not socially disconnected dormitory ghettos that the present Planning system is currently producing.*

*It is **RECOMMENDED (4)** that the functional operation of land-use Planning design and approval system for communities in the Perth- Peel Region as a whole be overhauled and thoroughly re-constructed to achieve higher quality of outcomes, especially for residential development. (Ref: Appendix 5 for explanation of this alternative, outlining a better way to 'future plan' and reduce 'community-cost'.)*

Terrestrial planning has proceeded southward from Metropolitan Perth in intensive patches of individual development, sometimes creative, sometimes environmentally destructive. Almost always stemming **from private Developer's own financial objectives** - in adding short-term dollar value for individuals and companies, by taking over large private land-holdings. This ad hoc, externally initiated 'planning' for development is not achieving results that are in the long term public interest. Private sector Developers for instance typically contract to purchase undeveloped land cheaply and pay for it later when development approvals are obtained (and often re-sell to inflate property values before building actually commences). - Development proposing the highest intensity of building use, to achieve highest added-value is inevitably favoured by them. Naturally any other community uses included within that parcel of land will lower the added-value, so under the current WA Planning System, those other community uses (that in fact could help to achieve balanced serviceable family-friendly communities) are frequently minimised or avoided.

These developments are currently authorised at ODP stage on the basis of little more than patches on paper diagrams and impressionistic sketches with copious and persuasive words alleging compliance with - a set of Planning rules and regulations embodied in WAPC guidelines (that could actually apply to virtually any site anywhere). The absence of comprehensive planning on a thoroughly researched foundation, typical with this system is almost guaranteed to put people-friendly community development last (not first as it should be).

Public Sector professional Planning of development should be at the same time both **Regulatory** to sponsor best practice in terms of community development, health, welfare and social cohesion; and **Creative** in the sense of promoting new and appropriate forms and settlements appropriate to their site location.

Creative Planning of new settlements should begin by assessing overall available land space, analyses its characteristics and features in detail in terms of fitness for various purposes, sets these against well researched future goals and builds up a complex outline vision of 3 dimensional alternative outcomes that can meet balanced long term uses in the collective public interest. It is itself a multi-disciplinary team function – including a range of professional skills ranging from e.g. detailed social and economic analysis through to concepts in 3D mass form. (But certainly not restricted to 2 dimensional maps based on only statistical data and randomly determined locations for building and infrastructure.)

Unfortunately, if the Creative phase due to rapid growth pressures is suppressed, or left in the hands of private interests to propose, **the Public interest is bound to be at serious risk. That is what has happened repeatedly so far in Peel-Harvey, Mandurah.** The outcome to date is not remotely balanced community development, or intelligent overall use of the overall township sites.

With the current urban Planning system and ODPs as the local neighbourhood determinant, private sector Developers, to achieve highest profitability, frequently avoid provision for e.g.- Social and safe open space for children; theme parks; social provision for adults and families; sporting clubs, cricket, tennis, bowling, football, hockey, tee ball, netball, athletics etc. Yet these are all essential components for sustainable residential communities with an ethos of 'home identity'. These privately initiated plans also **induce substantial on-going Community expenditure by other Government Agencies** that may not have been anticipated - for, e.g. provision of schools, social and commercial centres, parks etc. that the system is, for a variety of reasons not passing on to the original Developer. (I.e. another reason to improve Policy integration)

Without the essential public sector - research, analysis and creative planning intervention – the outcomes, if left to Developers as at present, verified now by overwhelming evidence in this Region under the existing Local Authority responsibility for ODP's - will inevitably tend to produce socially disconnected and visually arid residential areas – with obvious **negative social consequences.**

Massive multi-storey development of luxury units has been allowed and even actively supported by Local Authorities under this ODP approvals system, (e.g. in Mandurah) in many different locations **without supporting socio-economic evidence to prove need**; often in socially inappropriate locations and neither environmentally sensible or affordable to potential inhabitants. (In the Mandurah locality, 70% of those several hundred units currently remain unsold after 2 years.)

This region will not develop as an overall, attractive place to live and work unless improved and better managed cross-sectoral input to **public sector Creative Planning** is introduced to better constrain the extreme pressure for narrowly conceived proposals from Private Developers.

At the very least Local Authorities, permitted to have Planning responsibilities should, for instance, always have had regularly updated comprehensive '**State of Environment Reports**' covering the whole of their administrative territories readily available. They should also have '**Design Guides**' available for all aspects of urban enhancement such as e.g.- Design for creative outdoor play and family community development; separating vehicles and pedestrians, local transportation networks; employment creation possibilities with local resources; broad range recreation facilities; creative multi-dimensional urban landscape including ground contouring capability on flat sites; inclusive integration with natural ecology; creative control of visual advertising, etc. Unfortunately at present they frequently cannot offer these.

From a **Community perspective**, Planning in WA appears to be primarily desk-bound 2 dimensional 'map style' planning, disconnected from local human realities, that 'somehow happens' via some obscure process.

Partly as a result of **poor forward Planning**, social conditions in this Region **are actually in decline** as a result of **unbalanced population structure** and high unemployment (at present over 7%). There is currently a very limited range of employing industries, commerce and businesses. That is despite the

long-standing existence of a 'Peel Development Commission' with numerous staff to promote this. Unfortunately, and again, the absence of a thorough and detailed, regularly up-dated socio-economic research base that can identify circumstances that will achieve improved population balance and multiply the range of new enterprises, has further contributed to this decline.

This absence of fundamental socio-economic research validation by the Planning system overall has also encouraged the speculative over-development of private residential areas, as in Mandurah - with some now desperate speculating 'bought from plan' owners renting out at subsistence level rates to e.g. unemployed social security dependents, to avoid personal bankruptcy. Local Authority Planners evade responsibility for this by blandly accepting that there 'might be' extreme commercial risk and waste of resources and **denying it is their professional responsibility to assess local socio-economic need**. That alone is sufficient evidence for the Community now to mistrust Planning currently in this Region.

Sensible, steady and controlled **growth is expected** by the State Government as part of its 'Perth and Peel' future development concept. However, the **trends are the reverse** and directly attributable to poor demographic Planning having permitted unbalanced growth in the Region. e.g. - Many parents with young children are moving back to Perth as the children begin high school and after Year 10. That represents an emerging trend of parents in their 40's **moving out rather than into** this Region! Also, after an influx of owners having been speculatively attracted to heavily marketed large 2 storey residences as second home 'superannuation' investments toward retirement, large numbers of those are also empty, being far too large for retirement use. Retired people are also trending to return to Perth for other reasons associated with social and environmental deterioration. Again a recent 'dormitory ghetto' result of poor Planning.

APPENDIX 3. Review of current Planning processes against outcomes.

Section 1. The ODP and other elements of the existing Planning system, are failing the Community:

The ODP (Outline Development Planning) approvals process as currently operating has largely failed to achieve satisfactory outcomes and should be withdrawn at least for the time being because.-

- a) It has **not engaged community input** in lightly populated areas.
- b) Most importantly this process has led to large areas of land being currently put into speculative tenure by developers and then ‘mothballed’- out of pace with actual building needs. The land then being left untended (environmentally derelict) as residential fashions and household affordability have changed, fluctuating with the both personal and regional economic conditions. The local community, meanwhile, finds their surrounding property values diminished by this system-induced **‘Planning blight’**.

It is RECOMMENDED (5) as an immediate step-

- (i) **that this could be avoided if e.g. strict time limits for completion of the development were enforced by financial penalties and**
- (ii) **approval was to lapse if the original proponent to whom the approval was given ceased to own the land.**

The incapability of the current planning machinery overall to undertake effective socio-economic research and identify risks and probabilities for different types of development must be addressed as a priority.

- c) Actual **Community interests** in outcomes of neighbourhood planning have in general been effectively **marginalised** as a result of the way this ODP process operates – as explained below.-

Local Government planning, although originally conceived with the underlying principle of more localised community responsiveness, largely due to the operation of current ‘hands off’ but highly prescriptive WAPC guideline policies, has frequently resulted in the opposite effect through the result of current legislation.-

For example tiny groups of Planning Officers with an ad hoc and limited range of expertise, too small to have an adequate range of skills for the job (genuine planning requiring a balanced range of expertise in excess of what most authorities can afford to employ) are obliged to utilise the vicarious authority of the WAPC policies, where they have been documented.

In practice therefore, Officers unfortunately tend to accumulate power in excess of their actual sensitivity to social outcomes. As a result of this combination and the formal ‘delegations’ from WAPC for e.g. ODP approvals, they often accumulate excessive influence over decisions that determine development outcomes.

That is because, contrary to community expectations, only tenuous influence is possible on behalf of the community by elected Councillors. The community really depends ad hoc, on the range of visualisation experience and understanding of likely environmental and visual outcomes, by elected Local Councillors. Sometimes in the face of intense personal ‘lobbying’ by investor-Developers. However (and herein lies

the potentially undemocratic effect).- Local Councillors with minimal preparation, democratically elected by the community to supposedly 'represent' them, are instructed once elected, that with respect to planning decisions, they must change role to become the actual Planning decision-makers, on privately initiated proposals. (Whereas they were elected by the community with an expectation that they would 'without fear or favour' safeguard broad community interests). In effect therefore, Local Government 'planners', who are not elected; irrespective of their range of skill, effectively control outcomes (as selective vicarious proxy for the WAPC),. **The process has therefore has actually become effectively anti-democratic in operation** (and vulnerable to corruption innuendo).

Community input on Outline Development Plan proposals that immediately **affect them locally**, has further and **severe limitations**, since there is formally **only one initial publicised opportunity** offered for them to comment. Once this has passed, Planning Officers produce their synopsis of reactions, that they then present to Council Planning Committees who, (under Planning Officer guidance), then make recommendations to full Council. If the decision is not favourable to them, the proponent has recourse to a Planning Appeals Tribunal that can reverse the decision. But because in WA there is no provision for representation of third parties in Tribunal hearings, the Community is excluded, and indeed, often unaware of referrals.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED (6) that Local Authorities should not have decision making authority on neighbourhood planning at all **unless they can demonstrate that they can afford to employ and maintain a comprehensive range of professional skills**. They should be confined to individual building-control functions, subject to **Regional authority for planning of groups of buildings**. **Regional Planning authorities** should engage much more in Creative planning with balanced, comprehensive teamwork, adequate research in all relevant areas and especially reflect the distinctive characteristics of their Region. (Particularly where these are unique, as in Peel-Harvey, Mandurah.)

Unattractive visual and environmental outcomes: Local Government 'Planning' which, in action has been highly regulatory (not creative) and guided by State Planning (- that is itself also currently regulatory; simplistic; excessively prescriptive from a narrowly conceived perspective; and substantially disconnected from both visual three dimensional and ecological concern). The result is that visual environmental outcomes today are frequently - and predictably, mediocre. Together, as may be widely observed both within and outside of this Region, they have usually not produced attractive physical environments or successfully promoted either community cohesion or fostered, in the resulting residential environments, a personal sense of 'home' identity and inclusiveness in the Community.

State Planning Policies:

The WAPC guideline policies themselves **do not sponsor a visually creative three dimensional approach to urban planning**, in fact quite the reverse. As an example, the 172 pages of WAPC's 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' guideline which is frequently quoted from and relied upon by Local Authority Planners in 'guiding' inexpert Councillors, is pre-occupied with civil engineering detail, taken to extremes of prescription and appears curiously obsessed with a "surveillance" concept, that is avoidable and unnecessarily threatening. In general it presents a highly regulatory regime, prescriptive in tone and insensitive to the dire need in WA for more visual and socially inclusive creativity in neighbourhood design. Two dimensional diagrammatic 'flat plan' examples predominate and often in regular geometric patterns reminiscent of the 1930's, (before creative urban design was developed in other parts of the

world, notably in Europe). That guideline document, confirmed by the 'reading list' at the end, appears to have been based on residential Planning in the USA – a country not normally thought of as having much to offer in terms of creative contemporary 'liveable' urban design. It is **RECOMMENDED (7)** that this policy guidance should be withdrawn and completely re-written to sponsor far more creative and sympathetic design, to sponsor people-friendly, socially inclusive and visually creative, environmentally sustainable neighbourhood design.

More evidence of failure of Planning to positively influence visual outcomes:-

The completely chaotic visual result of neglect to contain **competitive visual advertising** has today reached ludicrous extremes where today it is rarely possible to easily locate a street number (even in St Georges Terrace, Perth!). Businesses, not just in this Region but everywhere in the State have been permitted to compete with each other for attention with ever larger, more visually compelling colourful signs, to the point that the visual confusion is such that nothing is left that actually 'works' and they have now resorted to fan-driven moving figures that leap out at one when driving along a road! This visually chaotic trend has even been recently permitted to go a stage further, in the already confused picture, with constantly moving electronic advertising messages being displayed to further distract the attention of drivers.

Since this **progressive descent into urban visual chaos** is general throughout urban WA, it is **RECOMMENDED (8)** that the Government require the WAPC/ WADP to devise and introduce enforceable legislation to make sense of this chaos. It should look to the forms of legislation used in those attractive and more visually controlled European cities that Australians love to visit, (rather than the USA!) for guidance. This visual disorder and distraction has even been permitted to extend onto rural freeways. For example on the approach to Mandurah adjacent to a Shire of Murray boundary sign, an **enormous permanent advertising structure above tree height** has recently been permitted to further distract drivers, with changing pictures and text, (advertising food brands and TV programmes!) and even actually on a curve in the road, with traffic signs at a lower level in front of it i.e. Visually inept Planning - madness!

Section 2.- Sustainability of Peel-Harvey Estuary to cope with surrounding development ?

A large number of Committees/ Authorities/ Councils etc. have been operating over several years, many of them under the aegis of the **State Water and Environment Departments** or their executive Agencies. The roles and functions of some are really comprehended only by the people who sit on them, and not often or well communicated to the community in terms of purpose and actual outcomes, **but they have** certainly produced voluminous reports and **many useful recommendations**.

Some of those have explored drainage patterns into the Estuary and directly concern detailed aspects of declining water quality, fishing stocks and wild-life habitat. Those under the supervision of the Peel Harvey Catchment Council have usually been very well presented. Bearing in mind the importance of their findings to the future survival of this valuable water body to the regional economy and future development; it is, from a Community perspective, **appalling that so few of the recommendations embodied in these Reports have been adopted for funding by successive State Governments**.

The plain fact is that there is **considerable confusion and overlap of Roles and responsibilities regarding sustainable land-use and no confidence that current provision will satisfactorily resolve this**.

This is further confirmed in the recent Peel Harvey Catchment 2011 “Condition and Priorities Report” and should be given serious and urgent attention by several Government Departments. That Catchment Council until recently had a substantial section, detailed on its web-site portraying a collaborative research strategy supported in principle by several different Agencies including some Government Departments including an impressive range of project activity (**Centre for Water Excellence**). It was however, surprisingly only a **‘virtual’ activity not yet being funded!** It is **RECOMMENDED (9)** that the Government seriously investigates multi-sector funding possibilities for this proposal that could contribute materially to the recovery and future sustainability of water quality in the Region and the Estuary. Bearing in mind the potential value of remedial work by this Catchment Council, the current State Government should in the immediate future be much more supportive of it financially.

An earlier concept proposal for a **research-support ‘Water Institute’** was commissioned from external private consultants in 2006. Apparently the then Peel Development Commission lobbied around for local financial support, but it was apparently not presented to either State or Federal Government for funding, but, curiously only presented to major industry for sponsorship - little wonder it was then stillborn. It is **RECOMMENDED (10)** that this proposal could/should be re-conceived as a more cost-effective building concept; with stronger research-support capability; secure the involvement of all WA Universities, the CSIRO; and then be submitted for funding to the Commonwealth Government (as a priority Scientific Research-support project in WA).

One major isolated residential development on the eastern side of the Estuary at Point Grey, proposed to and supported by the Murray Shire Council, is already at an advanced state of Planning approval. That is despite involving very ecologically risky, **repeated deep vacuum dredging of a deep channel in the fragile waterbed, 2.5km** across the very shallow Estuary from the Dawesville Cut; as well as deep excavation for an on-shore Marina to access to the Estuary for large ocean-capable boats. The official Chart for the Estuary shows however that the **deepest low-water level** along this route is in fact **only 1.4 metres !** (and 25% of the proposed route is even less or above water level altogether). This dredging alone, in a **known crab and fish breeding locality is forecast to result in serious depletion of stocks**. (There is also evidence that the Estuary is also slowly becoming shallower through natural silting). Again the existing Planning system did not provide adequate explanation to the Regional **Community** of these serious implications. *(A Regionally based cross-sectoral Authority, as proposed later in this Paper, would surely have approached this project more responsibly to first and foremost ensure sustainability of the Estuary).*

The **Department of Transport**, being responsible state-wide for licensing of water craft, navigational restriction and signage is **indirectly responsible for allowing further deterioration** of the delicate Estuary ecosystem and likely infringing Ramsar legislation.- It has e.g. permitted the licensing and use of up to 5 air-propeller driven ‘swamp craft’ on the Estuary. These have been observed driven at high speed directly over Samphire reserves through flocks of water-birds, well outside of any navigable channel. **Secondly** it has failed to regularly up-date survey and to delineate the few navigable channels that will avoid damaging benthic (waterbed) habitat. **Thirdly** it has not (in conjunction with DEC) marked shallow islands used for water-bird nesting as prohibited landing zones and has not placed signs on slipways explaining the limits of navigable water and reasons for exclusion. **Fourthly** it has not apparently consulted with Environmental Agencies for practical advice concerning speed limits in navigable channels most of which are marginally suitable for even medium sized inshore deep-keel powered watercraft. Bearing in mind the shallowness throughout, and future sustainable water use

objective it is **RECOMMENDED (11) that - all boats with a keel or skeg depth exceeding one metre, be now excluded altogether from the Estuary** to avoid disturbing the waterbed that maintains a profusion of ecologically essential water-creatures. This is especially important as the expansion of surrounding residential development increases the volume of recreational pressure on the Estuary.

Section 3. - Employment growth potential.

Balanced urban development must consider sustainable travel/ work commuting. Employment growth prospects in this Region are by no means assured. The long-standing Peel Development Commission was originally supposed to address this as its priority function but that contribution has apparently declined to be now rather insubstantial. It has currently no apparent useful contribution to offer in land-use and Community development. That view is borne out by assessment of their Strategic Plan against observable outcomes. It does appear now to be a local liaison Agency used primarily as a funding conduit from the Department of Regional Development, to encourage and collate project applications for Royalties for Regions funding. (Although it apparently has tried, not very successfully, to attract more employing-industry to the Region). This Agency however employs some 13 staff, who seem to devote a high proportion of their time to attending Committees run by other Agencies.

Tourism is a potential area for **employment growth** in the region but does require some fresh approaches to **developing Regional attractions** and to **Presentation**. A proposal to develop an innovative form of Eco-Discovery Centre based in Mandurah but linked throughout the Peel -Yalgorup system and initially focused on (locally high-volume international migratory) water-bird observation, using advanced remote access technology, was recently assembled and offered to Mandurah City Council (by the writer). Although this was received with considerable initial enthusiasm, it will require some modest initial pump-prime funding support that is currently not available and a suitable, difficult to find physical base, with additional enthusiastic entrepreneurial support to implement.

There could be significant possibilities, as the Region population develops further, for light manufacturing industry to be attracted, not only as 'service industry' but associated with the large maritime-related industrial complex growing south of Fremantle in Cockburn Sound.

However it is not the purpose of this Paper to do other than offer caution about the apparent, dubiously considered link, between the pace of residential development and accessible employment opportunities.

APPENDIX 4.

Summary: of Context and Organisational Recommendation.

Considering the compelling demographic factors, together with the seriously misunderstood resources of the environmentally 'at risk' and ecologically fragile Peel-Harvey Estuary being in the centre of this Region, the **need for a new State Government Development and Planning intervention is obvious and urgent.**

Such an initiative should be devised to be highly proactive; socially astute, and skilled in environmental interpretation, consider all dimensions of sustainable community development in the Region and deliver an environmentally responsible urban development component that will be complementary to Metropolitan Perth.

Context - summarised.-

1. The State Government as part of its future urban development policy to accommodate predicted population growth currently plans to expand urbanised Perth southward to include the Peel Region as part of a 'Connected City'. However, the land-form encompassing a large Estuary poses unusual challenges; local executive organisation overall is currently inadequately integrated; and essential cross-sector Departmental input is not being managed.
2. The preceding legacy was - low planning priority; and limited external understanding of special local land-use tolerance issues associated with the Estuary. These have now become critical limitations on development.
3. Organisationally, Local Authority boundaries are not helpful, when compared with the topography and development potential (and proactive professional capacity in the Region to create attractive environments) is inadequate.
4. Local unemployment is currently 7% and rising. Facilities planning (and opportunity 'ethos') for retaining youth and families for the future are proving inadequate.
5. Large employing Industries are on the margins. Creative employment multipliers are absent.
6. Local Authority Planning has been 'bowled-over' completely by Developers – (who are now 'running away from socially unacceptable built form they have created' - or holding empty land if they can't sell it, to build "10+ years ahead" with resultant standing and redundant ODP approvals putting swathes of prime land into deserted disuse and de-valuing surrounding property.
7. The Centre of the Region (Peel-Harvey, Estuary) is a very large body of virtually 'standing' water that is slowly but surely turning into an 'ecologically dead swamp'. Lower reaches of the Serpentine and parts of the Murray feeder Rivers are already ecologically 'dead' (quote from commissioned scientific evaluation). Recovery presents problems and is being exacerbated by surrounding development.

8. Edible Crab that the Peel Harvey Estuary is famous for, without planned restorative intervention, will have disappeared within a generation and even wading will involve health risks.
9. There are, or have been, a large number of Councils/Studies/Authorities/ Commissions in the Region with overlapping roles and responsibilities - investigating extensively - with apparent goodwill and intent, and producing a large volume of advisory 'Reports' but **lacking a local executive delivery focus** or functional Authority to implement. All of these in some way or other **are in fact making some positive contribution to future sustainable land-use Planning in the Region, yet not perceived as such by the current State Planning Machinery – and should be.**
10. The net effect of Public sector 'Planning' machinery as it exists overall in this Region, is for practical purposes inadequate to deliver Creative Development. (It is paper-based overview by agencies collectively focused on 'Regulation' and with little evident creative exemplar leadership being offered to achieve visually attractive environment; balanced community growth; or practical visions for creating cohesive and interesting 21st century residential communities).
11. Government Departments with a variety of different executive functions, based in Perth are called in to investigate and arbitrate on Local development issues they frequently don't have a brief or time to fully appreciate. The inter-relatedness of issues baffles most and they 'run away' or 'pass the buck' as – "not being our problem".
12. Some local residents – drawn in by glamorous promises made by Developers are disillusioned and feel let-down; disturbed by increasing social 'in-your-face' night-time conflicts; expect no immediate improvement and many "wish we hadn't come and are actually headed back to Perth any time soon." (Property values, especially high-end and multi-storey are not even static, but have been in seriously rapid free-fall for 2 years).

RECOMMENDATION (Organisation) (12)

Responding to foregoing investigated analysis, the State Government urgently needs a more integrated means to secure balanced Development to suit the particularly complex challenges of the Peel Region.

*The Government also needs to demonstrate understanding and resolve to the Community by a **concerted Action Plan**. The **following proposal** is recommended for serious consideration by all Ministers, **both individually and collectively**:-*

Objective: - An Executive Management initiative, to enhance future Development of the Peel Region.-

Alternative options?

One would be a Development Corporation, as Joondalup, initiated by the vision of the Sir Charles Court Government– in the late 1970's (that was also intended to address special regional conditions). While this may be desirable in Peel, it is perhaps not immediately practical to deliver the immediate action that is now necessary, due to the need to 'disentangle' (then integrate) some established Local Authority

functions. That could however be considered as a medium term objective flowing naturally on from the **recommended initiative below**, which is to establish:-

A Peel Regional Development Authority - With the following Terms of Reference and Functions–

- a) To create new integrated cross-sectoral development strategies –to achieve an optimum and future sustainable balance of all functions and services that comprise long-term serviceable settlements – for the particular distinctive topography and physical environment of the Peel Region.
- b) Take firm and Creative action locally, to support balanced and sustainable physical Environmental Planning with Community engagement –to achieve growth of socially cohesive, connected communities throughout the Region.
- c) To achieve connected and serviceable development. Comprehensively planned to promote socially inclusive family-centred community cohesion and ensure parallel growth of:- educational and employment opportunities; light-industrial, commercial and business expansion; improved social communication and recreation facilities; economic inter and intra-regional travel networks; growth of tourism and hospitality provision.
- d) Vitally, and above all to be consistent with, and including conservation of the valuable natural estuarine environment and restorative enhancements of natural drainage and water-quality.
- e) To create conditions for more extensive Community Engagement and applied-research in all critical aspects of future development of the Region.

The primary objective will be to achieve a sustainable, co-existing balance of human settlement and natural environment, in the Peel Region, to mutual advantage.

One major (Planning) section of this Authority would, at an early date, subsume responsibility for Outline Development Planning control throughout the Region - with delegated powers from, the State Planning Commission (in accordance with the Government Approved State Planning Framework). In this regard the new Authority would initially intercede with its own locally relevant, researched recommendations between the existing Local Authorities and the State Planning Commission , but (having a direct line of accountability to the Planning Minister for that function) eventually take-over full responsibility for Development Planning control within the Region. Building licence administration would remain with the existing Local Authorities for the time being, but subject to the overall administration of Regional Developmental Planning as set out above.

The overall operating ethos is to emphasise the promotion and integration of cross-sectoral collaboration of Government Agencies and ensure cohesion in all aspects of service delivery. In all respects the Authority would aim to be organisationally creative and proactive in responding to the Special challenges of this Region.

Implementation: -

(The Concept re-stated, is) - **A cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary Development Authority, for and based in, the Peel-Harvey, Mandurah Region, charged with objectively engaging with and optimally resolving,**

all the conflicting urban and natural environmental development pressures; and with announced intent to operationally integrate the effect 'on the ground,' of all Government policy input that may relate to the Region - and proactively achieve action to advance all aspects of Developing the Region.

a) **Timing** – it is opportune to **act now** while limited available private finance has reduced immediate external developmental pressures.

b) **Resources** – Immediate action is feasible by selective cross-sector Secondments, assembling an integrated, enthusiastic, action-orientated Team of keen intelligent people with proven capability to listen, synthesise, collaborate, create and implement practical solutions in various fields. Contagious enthusiasm and team-work capability is essential. Some short term consultancy input may be feasible, with new appointments - when practical according to Budget.

c) **Enabling** - initially by delegation/s, Cabinet to select preferred Ministerial portfolio for line of functional accountability.

d) **Reporting and Accountability** - recommended to be directly to one Minister, for clearly defined functions and delivery, with relationships to Departmental CEO's and other Ministerial Portfolios clearly defined and the means to resolve any potential or emerging ambiguity specified.

APPENDIX 5.

Planning of Future Metropolitan Development – proposed re-organisation.

(Planning responsibilities supposedly taken on behalf of the community can place a small number of people at the centre of Policy formation in a very powerful position in terms of indirectly shaping lives.)

The Future of Perth and Peel projected in 'Directions 2031' together with the subsequent sequel '2031 and beyond' includes much discussion about population growth objectives and land-use requirements. Despite the selective photographs of individual buildings, the documents do not portray with honesty the existing built environment we have.

Although the original physical environment of what is now the metropolitan centre was visually very attractive, we appear to have done our best over recent years to obliterate it and replace it with a disordered jumble of buildings of all shapes and sizes with no comprehensive, worthwhile overall visual concept. - Saved only by the relaxing flat expanse of the Swan River; that widens, then narrows around the natural barrier of Kings Park; and curves its way to Fremantle and the ocean.

Outside of that Central area, the visual quality of the metropolitan area 'descends' into rarely relieved urban sprawl for tens of kilometres north, south and east - until halted by the rising ground of the Darling Scarp.

Thus far, in the future overall 'planning' concept, only population land-use requirements have been forecast, but there are two vital components missing from this 'futures plan'. -

1. Comprehensive management - The existing collective 'Planning' bureaucracy applying across the enlarging metropolitan complex is proving generally inappropriate to optimally manage for the future, and -
2. Visual design creativity has been badly neglected in this Planning system we have, this is evident everywhere one looks in Perth and Peel at present. Co-ordinated enhancement of Urban Design in all its components is essential and urgent.

The Planning Bureaucracy.- now, and future?-

AS NOW:-In the simplest conceptual terms we have;- a State Department of Planning (WADOP) legally topped-off by a small but authoritative Commission (WAPC) that is the fount of enabling legislation. These together develop and draw together over-arching 'policy', but are in remote, not direct contact with the community being planned-for.

An assorted group of Shire and 'City' Local Authority Councils, currently have (by delegations) responsibility to authorise development; through both outline-development plans (ODP) for residential localities and regulating building within them.

However, **land-supply is generally not in the hands of any of these Government organisations**, but depends upon **unpredictable and un-planned** (ad hoc) decisions of private 'Developers' to contract by various means, to purchase land wherever they see profitable opportunities.

Those Developers in turn submit plans to develop land to fit 'guidelines' emanating from the WAPC;

prepared by the WAPD. Once these outline plans are approved; parcels or blocks of land are then on-sold to speculative Builders; who market and sell 'house-and-land packages' to retail purchasers.

The only contact the community has with the planning system is once - When a proposed development is advertised for 'public comment' – and that will depend upon whether the advertising in the 'Public Notices' sections of newspapers or a local signboard, is noticed and recognised by existing residents in the surrounding area as affecting them.

The community has no certainty of direct discussion with either the proponent Developer, Council Planning Officer or lay Councillors who make the decisions sitting as a Committee. Local Planning Officers actually then have a highly influential role in this overall system because it falls to them to both summarise public comment for Councillors and to advise Councillors on interpretation of WAPC 'guidelines'.

Who are 'planners' in these various government agencies? They in fact have a variety of academic backgrounds such as the natural sciences - geography, environmental and social scientists, demographers, and, very rarely, from architecture and landscape architecture. In terms of professional credibility they can only function properly in operational mode if they work as inclusive and integrated teams with all those skills being contributed. Unfortunately while this can sometimes occur at State agency level, it is very rarely possible to maintain such professional teams at Local Council level. Consequently there is a strong possibility at local level that the 'Planning Officers' available may have very limited expertise in key areas and have to rely (vicariously) for their authority on their interpretation of 'guidelines' issued by the WAPC.

Notice then a) how remote, disconnected and powerless the community are from this complicated 'planning' bureaucracy that will have a direct effect on deciding the immediate home environment that most will live in for the rest of their lives. Little wonder most people feel completely disenfranchised from any visibility or real say whatsoever in this process.

Notice also b) how little actual control the State Government or local Councils generally have on Land supply (i.e. no control whatsoever). In this respect the current private Developer-driven system is wasteful, lacking in coordinated directions, and frequently leaves the Government unable to ensure land supply to cope with fluctuating demand. The current system also produces cyclic over-supply, out of phase with building progress and intermittently leaves tracts of land uncertainly derelict, in turn having a negative effect on surrounding property values and natural environment.

Notice again - c) What extremely limited possibilities exist for creative urban visual designers (architect/planners and urban landscape architects) to contribute their design skills in this process *when (note-) they should, , to function professionally, have direct involvement in the specific site and final form of buildings and the spaces between them.* (i.e. again **negligible, or no possibilities at all**).

Summarised from the above it can be seen that;- **Land-supply, site evaluation and creative development initiative – are currently left in the hands private developers to initiate and control, and all at present effectively beyond the reach of the Government to manage.**

This system does not secure for urban localities and sub-regions an adequate range of concentrated coordinated professional expertise to provide either assured consistent policy-research, or lead to reliably structured outcomes. Very few skilled professional urban designers (architect- planners and urban-landscape architects) are available anywhere within this system to conceptualise 3 dimensional outcomes, especially in vital spatial relationships between buildings, and form of spaces between them.

Also, demographic profiling research (apparently largely absent) that should be an intrinsic function of serious Metropolitan professional Planning, should be far better able to forecast and anticipate where and in what socio-economic categories planned provision is required.

(An example is e.g. in Mandurah over the past 5 years, where massive over-provision of hundreds of multi-storey luxury residential units are completely unjustified by assessable need for the available population. While speculative builders always have to take some risk, that level of out-of-scale gambling being allowed to waste community effort and resources to that extent is just not acceptable).

FUTURE:- RECOMMENDATIONS (13) - While it is impossible, in a few paragraphs without causing offence, to provide a thorough and detailed assessment of the relevance of the existing planning system, that is discharged through complex legislation and then propose a considered alternative, the above analysis does suggest attention to the following.-

In designing for the future it is important always to look back and assess the previous outcomes. They are frequently far less satisfactory than the original policy makers believed they would be. This is often due to over-cumbersome and poorly structured **bureaucracy**, where enough care has not been taken to ensure that it **can truly deliver the intended outcomes** - economically and on-time.

Strategic Planning Policy should be broad, state-wide; thoroughly researched and indicate preferred development within Regions. **Tactical** means to deliver outcomes should be Regional and **only be managed by larger teams** employed to work directly in the public interest. They must include a **comprehensive range of directly relevant professional skill and experience embracing all disciplines likely to affect final outcomes** e.g. statistical demographic, economic, social psychological, industrial /transportation, geomorphological, natural environmental, 3D urban spatial design/architectural.

Above all, we need to remind ourselves **what and who 'Planning' is actually for** and be realistic about its limitations. Our Communities are increasingly technologically connected and tending to live part of their lives in a 'virtual' environment, yet they are increasingly disconnected socially despite proximity between their individual 'personal-spaces'. This **latter disconnection breeds a personal sense of insecurity and mutual suspicion**. The social psychologist would say - therefore it is becoming ever more important to create residential environments that provide not only a comfortable 'home base' but also foster neighbourliness directly through the forms of 'shelter' that are built and the external spaces between them.

Looking back it is possible to see, as a result of **past 'planning'**, how social disconnection **has resulted in loss of personal identity** and also, that **loss of interpersonal respect**, depressing individual identity and **bred antisocial behaviour** in all its forms. This has been a direct result of both rapid developments in affordable and personalised information technology; and inadequate attention the consequences for detailed planning and design of residential areas. It is vital to consider that **Planning is for people** and therefore **must take closer account of how they live and will live in the future**.

The existing public planning system has in fact **not been in control of environmental outcomes being realised, but just let them happen** by relying on the crudest form of planning - that is 'planning' as a flat plan assembly of 'zones' and leaving the 3 dimensional building forms and spatial connection details to chance. Speculative builders who arrive after private investment Developers have bought, subdivided then sold on the land, have only the individual building envelope and its 'block' to offer They then have

to build with no creatively designed visual relationship between dwellings and no creative design of the spaces between them.

Future public sector planning for an enlarged Metropolitan Perth must therefore must be much more directly engaged and creative and far more closely involved with 3 dimensional design to avoid these disconnections. It is therefore now time, in the public sector, to concentrate professionals into larger groups who can contribute with their various complementary skills, in multi-skilled professional **Urban Design** teams rather than just land-use planning teams. These concentrations should be initially assembled by State Government, but need not have constant specific local identity, but operate in various sectors on a project basis – in parallel with basic land-use planning being done at Regional or large district, but not local, scale - and **linked with direct urban Land purchasing.**

The private enterprise developer- initiated ODP concept, should then be discarded, with **the State purchasing land**, changing use only on an ‘as and when required’ (lease-back) basis, for **group building** development **within City boundaries** and so able to remove the profit seeking middle-men and therefore substantially **lower the net cost of homes and ensure much more reliable supply.**

‘Orderly’ Planning always involves balancing conflicting demands. –e.g. Industry locations, work/ home travel distances; competition for space/ choice locations; population distribution; local densities; availability of communal services; conservation of landform and natural ecology. Compromise will always be required in Metropolitan development, but due to the future rapidly changing social ethos, **community participation** must be made much more effective, and **real effort** made to educate, inform and have much better dialogue with the public about choices that have to be made.

[As a footnote on future terminology: As the ‘City’ is expanding massively, it is suggested that the now confusing term ‘City’ could be removed from the title of all local Authorities and be applied only to the enlarged aggregate Metropolitan City of Perth (and any others of over 500,000 population). The term ‘Metropolitan District Council’ of ... could be introduced for localities within the new City boundaries. The term ‘Shire’ Council then reserved for predominantly rural Councils, embracing only very small settlements and the term ‘Town Council’ reserved for the medium size settlements between Shires. In this way the current City of Perth Council would become the ‘Central Perth District Council’. A less acceptable alternative would be leave all as-is and to refer to the enlarged City of Perth as ‘Greater Perth.’]

(The writer may be contacted personally by email on community23@bigpond.com)
