

## **PLANNING SCHEMES — PERTH SUBURBS**

### *Statement*

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [6.42 pm]: I rise tonight to talk about the consequences of ideologically driven planning schemes in the suburbs of Perth. On the weekend, I had the privilege of attending a community meeting in Trailwood Drive, Woodvale with about 40 people from the community and Scott Edwardes, the Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Kingsley. I was directed to a development on that street that was shocking in its scale and composition. Something like the development being built at 80 and 82 Trailwood Drive, Woodvale should not be permitted in the suburbs of Western Australia.

I say that because there has to be a balance that is sensible, sensitive and gains community consensus for where residential infill should be driven across the metropolitan area. It can be done in a way that achieves strategic outcomes for the betterment of communities throughout Perth, is profitable, provides developers with a sense of security and certainty, and balances everybody's expectations throughout the process. Throughout Western Australia, a degree of community dissatisfaction with the prevailing culture in the Western Australian urban planning framework is emerging. It is more than mere nimbyism. People have legitimate complaints and concerns about the manner in which the fabric of their communities is being changed at the stroke of a pen. There are, I suppose, a number of guilty parties responsible for these kinds of aberrations. I believe that the community is sick of fixing the blame on local government, state government, or particular professions, and would prefer to fix the problem.

I have previously spoken in this place about the enthusiastic but dreadful outcomes that the City of Joondalup has pursued to achieve largely arbitrary infill targets through its housing opportunity areas policy. The outcomes have been appalling because they were driven by ideology and conducted in only two dimensions. There has been a desktop task. Effectively, someone got out a compass and drew a 400-metre radius around the nearest train station and determined, ipso facto, that that is where the city would whack infill. In real life, there are complications such as streetscape; sterilised land; arterial road corridors such as Mitchell Freeway, which undercut the concept of walkability; and the topography of an area. Thinking in two dimensions is not always applicable to the third dimension. There are complications around the contours of street design; infill is not appropriate for cul-de-sacs. However, this is what people in the City of Joondalup have been dealing with for the better part of the last three or so years.

To its credit, the City of Joondalup has woken up to the disaster and has attempted to modify its existing local planning scheme. These modifications are not perfect, but they do a lot to temper the excesses and aberrations. They do so in a way that has found some measure of support across the community, whether they are people who live in Warwick, Kingsley or Woodvale. At the meeting on Saturday, community members prevailed on me to do everything in my power to seek clarity about how the Western Australian Planning Commission might deal with the City of Joondalup's amendment and when it might deal with it. The City of Joondalup made amendment 5 to its local planning scheme 3 in late March this year. I acknowledge the obvious difficulties created by the impact of COVID and the like. Nevertheless, that amendment at least established modifications to the housing opportunity area policy in a way that made trees on blocks mandatory, mandated minimum landscaping requirements, articulated minimum visitor parking, established better setbacks and put in maximum storey heights. This generally fitted with the needs of the community. Those people are not nimbys. They are sensible and understand the need for development, but it needs to be done in a sensitive and orderly way.

That amendment was forwarded to the Western Australian Planning Commission on 3 April this year. I can be specific about that date because I asked a question through the Minister for Environment representing the Minister for Planning in this place about its progress. There is absolutely no certainty about when the Western Australian Planning Commission or one of its subsidiary committees—most likely, the statutory planning committee—might form a view on this or get an opportunity to deal with it. I find that unfortunate. I think the commission is in a position to give that community a better sense of when it might endorse that amendment, if, indeed, that is its intention. The line I got back was that it would deal with it sometime in the last quarter of this year, which, quite frankly, I think was a pretty dismal official response, particularly as the community had been given some indication that that scheme would be approved or at least dealt with in September. That opportunity, obviously, is passing it by. This is indicative of what I mentioned earlier—a cultural problem within the planning framework. Before the winter recess, we dealt with amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2005 that were effectively framed as an economic response to COVID-19. Throughout the course of the briefings on that bill, the department gave certain undertakings that a second tranche of legislation would focus on improving the community consultation and engagement processes in planning decisions. Furthermore, we were given not so much as an assurance, but every indication that the government would be in a position to introduce that second tranche of legislative changes by the end of this year. I asked today through the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Peter Collier—in these bizarre COVID circumstances—and was referred through three ministers but I got back an answer. I asked very clearly: What is the content or proposed content? Has permission to draft been received? When might the bill be brought forward? I was referred

to the reform plan, without any reference to the content, and told that the government will not be introducing new legislation prior to the end of this year. That might surprise everybody here, considering the management effectiveness of government legislation that we have experienced in the last few weeks. I did not expect that any new legislation would be introduced this year. Nevertheless, the minister cannot give any guarantee that she is dealing with community engagement improvements or consultation improvements in any meaningful sense. Unfortunately, she is confirming a bias that many in the community hold that the planning system and the planning minister serve only the big end of town and completely disregard the community.