



The Hon. Cameron Dick MP
Minister for State Development, Manufacturing,
Infrastructure and Planning

Our ref: MC19/1239

29 MAR 2019

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

Neil,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March 2019 regarding petition 2989-18: Reform of Queensland Planning Legislation.

I acknowledge the concerns raised by the petitioners regarding the need to review and improve planning laws to emphasise the community's interest. The current planning laws are the result of major reform and consultation, where every planning instrument in the framework was reviewed in the lead up to the commencement of the *Planning Act 2016* (Planning Act).

I agree that there is a need to ensure balance between the interests of developers and the community to ensure our enviable lifestyle and environmental qualities are preserved. I am of the view however that the current planning framework responds to this challenge and enables this balance to be realised through various planning instruments.

Community engagement in planning processes

In Queensland, local governments are empowered to make decisions they consider appropriate to meet the needs and views of their community. Matters such as neighbourhood character, open space, building heights, density and heritage, are all considered through the preparation, implementation and enforcement of planning schemes, policies and laws.

Through the reform of the planning framework, community engagement was given greater prominence in all statutory instruments. To ensure communities have their say in the creation or change to a planning scheme, the Minister's Guidelines and Rules provide clear public notification timeframes and requirements for local governments. To better suit the diverse needs of communities, local governments now have greater flexibility to nominate the process they wish to use for plan making with their community. Practical tools were also provided to local governments to assist them in consulting with their community, including a Community Engagement Toolkit and accredited community engagement training.

Transparency and accountability in development decisions

Queensland's planning framework is performance based to provide for innovation and flexibility in how development responds to local circumstances. Council's are also empowered when creating planning schemes to determine what types of development and under what circumstances should be impact assessable and subject to public notification and accompanying appeal rights.

While Queensland's dispute resolution system is generally very well-regarded nationally and internationally, improvements were made through the planning reform process in response to community feedback. For example, to ensure costs don't act as a deterrent to residents and/or community groups exercising their appeal rights, each party now pays its own costs for proceedings. Through the planning reform process, decision-makers, both state and local government, are now required to publish their reasons for development decisions. Publishing the reasons for decisions helps the community to understand why a decision was made, makes the system more transparent and ensures greater accountability for assessment decisions.

Meeting community need for infrastructure and services

To ensure adequate provision of infrastructure and services for the community, the State Infrastructure Plan (SIP), introduced in 2016, outlines the Queensland Government's strategic direction for the planning, investment and delivery of infrastructure in Queensland. Importantly, the SIP includes an update on Cross River Rail, the Queensland Government's signature infrastructure project and an update on how infrastructure is tracking to meet the renewable energy target of 50 per cent by 2030.

In South East Queensland, where some of the greatest pressures on infrastructure will be experienced, *ShapingSEQ*, the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017, establishes the Growth Monitoring Program. The Land Supply and Development Monitoring Online Report and Measures that Matter dashboard are core deliverables of this program and were released in December 2018. The online report tracks trends in growth, development and land supply annually, while the dashboard compares regional indicators of the natural, economic and social environment against the preferred future identified by *ShapingSEQ*. These initiatives help guide evidence-based policy and decision-making to facilitate more sustainable growth in the region.

When making decisions on infrastructure at a local level, local governments must consider the impacts from development and balance this with other matters such as adequate infrastructure, services and land for the environment, to meet the state interests in the Queensland planning framework, including the State Planning Policy.

A planning framework responsive to policy changes

The Queensland planning system plays a key role in advancing policy on a wide range of matters important to the community. When the Planning Act commenced, it included, as part of advancing the purpose of the Act, the valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition. The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP) is progressing important work with local governments to provide advice on approaches to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, recognising that information about knowledge, culture and tradition may be sacred or sensitive.

DSDMIP is also working closely with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to deliver the planning response to the recommendations of the Koala Expert Panel. This work will help support the continuation of koalas in South East Queensland by protecting critical koala habitat alongside other measures such as threat management and habitat restoration.

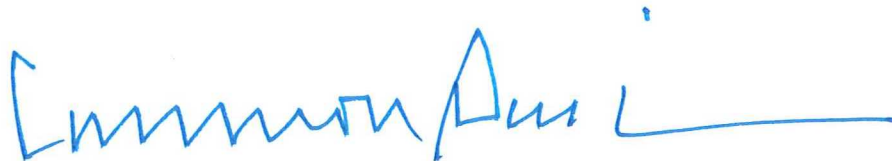
Continual monitoring of the planning framework

DSDMIP continues an ongoing program for refinements to the planning framework in response to feedback it receives. The *Economic Development and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018* introduced into Parliament on 19 September 2018 seeks to amend the Planning Act in response to stakeholder feedback since it commenced in 2017. Consultation on the intent of the amendments occurred with key stakeholders in the development, legal, environment and local government sectors and, overall, there was broad support for the policy intent of the Bill.

Where reforms and improvements are proposed, DSDMIP will continue to consult with key stakeholders, local governments, industry bodies and the public.

I thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cameron Dick', followed by a long horizontal line.

CAMERON DICK MP
Minister for State Development, Manufacturing,
Infrastructure and Planning