



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Planning Reform



6. Improving Community Engagement

The State Government is reforming the *Planning and Development Act 2005*, *Planning and Development (Local Planning Scheme) Regulations 2015* and State planning policies to create a more flexible, responsive and contemporary planning system that can support Western Australia's economic recovery. This is the culmination of more than three years of consultation across all sectors and the community to deliver high quality and sustainable development, create new employment and business opportunities, and ensure people have their say early about future development in their communities.

The growth and development of the State is a shared responsibility of all of us. The aim is to engage the community earlier in setting the planning framework for the communities where they live.

Under the existing system, the focus continually falls on individual projects, rather than on the scheme or planning framework under which these projects are delivered. The aim of these reforms is to ensure the planning framework – including the scheme – has been developed in consultation with the community, and is guided by a local planning strategy to develop liveable and attractive precincts.

Key Reforms

There are three key components in improving community engagement and consultation:

1. Elevating local planning strategies
2. Consistent and transparent consultation practices
3. Ensure real community benefits flow from major developments

1. Local Planning Strategies

Proposed amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2005* will elevate the status of local planning strategies to ensure all local governments have a clear, contemporary and consolidated planning and development vision for their local area. Meaningful community consultation and engagement throughout the process is integral to the preparation of a local planning strategy to alleviate confusion and ensure there are no surprises about the types of development that can occur within our suburbs.

Currently, there is no reference to a local strategy within planning legislation meaning the importance of articulating aspirations and setting a future vision can be underestimated and misunderstood. Planning reform measures will:

- ensure that local planning strategies align with the State's planning framework;
- give local planning strategies the highest level of importance in community planning and development;
- give local communities a greater say in setting the future vision of their neighbourhoods, early in the planning process;
- extend the minimum period of community consultation for a local planning strategy from 21 to 35 days, providing more time for people to provide their feedback;



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- reinforce the need to take a more strategic approach to the development of our communities; and
- provide meaningful opportunities for residents and visitors to have their say in shaping how development in their community might evolve.

2. Consistent and Transparent Consultation Practices

Through regulatory and policy reforms, consultation practices will be improved. These include:

- New requirements for onsite signage displaying an image of the proposed built form, for all developments over a prescribed construction value.
- Introducing State-wide consultation processes for all development applications, including mandating a radius model for major development applications and scheme amendments. This includes clear requirements on the information provided to landowners and residents.
- Enabling planning documents to be published online, as opposed to only being available for inspection.
- The development of a community engagement toolkit for all planning authorities to provide consistent and contemporary best practice guidance on how and when to engage during the planning process.
- Measures to streamline the review process for planning documents to ensure they remain current and contemporary, and reflect local aspirations and priorities.
- Further reforms will be considered and progressed to ensure that local planning schemes provide greater clarity and are more consistent in how land can be used, and what can and can't be built on a site. This will give the local community and industry and greater understanding of development potential within their local area.

3. Ensure Real Community Benefits Flow From Major Developments

- Many local schemes do not clearly define community benefit, when providing bonuses to developments in the area. There has been a lack of guidance from the State Government on what should and could be achieved under the definition of community benefit.
- As a result, many communities have seen no real community benefits delivered from significant projects – with examples where some local government areas now include an abundance of unused meeting rooms being provided in new apartment buildings.
- New State-wide, consistent guidelines for community infrastructure, and how development contributions are collected, held and used across all local planning schemes including cash-in-lieu provisions for parks, recreation and public open space will be introduced.

Implementation

- Three streams of reform – legislative, regulatory and policy – will be implemented progressively, with some interdependencies between the instruments. These will be supported by contemporary guidance documents.
- The first of two Bills comprising amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2005* will be considered by State Parliament in May 2020.



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- Some parts of the legislation will come into effect upon Royal Assent, as approved by the Governor, or on a specified date, while other changes require supporting regulations.
- Changes to the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Scheme) Regulations 2015*, guidance for local strategic planning and the community engagement toolkit are expected in the next 12 months.
- The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage will finalise and review planning policies for residential design codes and activity centres later this year. Draft policies for medium density and liveable neighbourhoods will also be released for public consultation, and work is ongoing to review policies relating to hazards such as bushfire management and coastal erosion.

Desired Outcomes

- A consistent approach to community engagement and consultation for all strategic planning documents to ensure everyone can have their say throughout the right stages of the process.
- Reinforcing the importance of the early opportunity for community consultation in planning and development decisions impacting your suburbs.
- Better engagement with the community to ensure the future development vision and associated planning documents align with local aspirations.
- A range of convenient options to access planning documents and development applications, allowing local governments to publish online in addition to making copies available for physical inspection at Council offices and selected public buildings. Interested community members and stakeholders can access documents from the comfort of their own home, at a time convenient to them, or to access more direct customer service.
- Reactivate town centres by progressing important community works.
- Reduce ambiguity between State and local planning frameworks.
- Replace complex 'jargon' with consistent, plain-English terms to ensure planning documents are easy for everyone to understand.
- Create greater flexibility through a shift in focus to strategic, not statutory planning.
- Guidance to make strategic goals easier to develop and understand, in plain-English and reduce the burden of strategic planning, enabling local governments to respond to local, long-term and immediate community needs.