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Local Government Reform in WA – Review Coordinator
Local Government Advisory Board
C/o Department of Local & regional Development
GPO Box R1250
PERTH WA 6844

To Whom It May Concern:

Local Government Structural and Electoral Reform

UDIA is the peak body representing the urban development industry in Western Australia. It is in this capacity that we welcome this review and thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this review.

As an industry property developers are keenly aware of the resourcing and efficiency problems currently being faced by local authorities and the impacts that local authority inefficiencies have on the development industry and the economy as a whole.

In this regard we believe that this review provides a unique opportunity to resolve some of these issues including:

- Inappropriate or inefficient local authority boundaries which fail to reflect the real development, economic, social and service structures in the region.
- Lack of resource sharing and co-operation between different local authorities.
- Duplication across different local authorities and poor co-ordination of policy requirements.

Key issues

UDIA concurs with the issues identified in the background paper. In particular we are concerned about the difficulty that local authorities are increasingly facing in trying to meet the growing expectations of the community, particularly in funding the infrastructure and services demanded by residents.

This issue is compounded in locations where local authority boundaries fail to adequately reflect the real economic and social structures of the area and, as a result, require some authorities to bear the cost of infrastructure and services to meet increased demand which has resulted from growth which has actually occurred in other neighbouring authority areas.

Associated with this are the inefficiencies created by the duplication in administration and capital requirements which result from running two local or more local authorities for areas which may be able to be effectively governed by one.

UDIA and the development industry as a whole would, in principle, support the amalgamation or rationalisation of local authorities where these types of issues are evident. In particular we request that the review considers how these issues could be addressed in areas such as the south west, where development pressure in areas such as Bunbury has resulted in the city's suburban areas stretching into neighbouring, predominately rural authorities, creating funding and management issues for the authorities in question and causing duplication and inefficiency for industry.

Resource Sharing and Co-operation

There is clearly a need for increased resource sharing and co-operation between different local authorities and we believe that there are opportunities for this to occur based both on geographical locations (i.e. resource sharing between authorities located next to each other geographically) as well as between Councils that are facing similar types of issues and growth (such as the existing Growth Councils Forum facilitated by WALGA) which are likely to have similar skill and resource requirements.

There is a need for formal links and alliances to be developed between these authorities to allow for resource sharing and for increased consistency in policy and decision making where possible.

Duplication

The 144 local authorities in WA all have different policies to deal with similar or identical issues, such as development and engineering specifications (such as kerbing profiles). This has produced an unnecessary level of complexity and inefficiency in development processes in the state.

UDIA members have long expressed concern regarding the level of duplication and lack of consistency between the policy requirements of different local authorities and we believe that the development of consistent standards for local authorities on these issues would allow for increased efficiency both in government and industry.

We recognise the need for diversity on a significant number of issues to respond to different environmental and social contexts however we believe that consistent guidelines should be developed and applied wherever possible. This would be far more efficient for both local government and industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this review. UDIA would appreciate the opportunity to provide additional input into the review at future stages in the process.

Yours sincerely

MARION FULKER
Executive Director