

POSITION STATEMENT

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE



Context

The requirement for 10% of the gross subdivisible area to be given up free of cost by the subdivider for Public Open Space, or payment made in lieu, is accepted by the industry.

Developers develop POS and provide high quality assets to local governments. In most cases, open space development adds great value to the area thereby increasing rates and a sense of identity for new communities.

Public Open Space plays a pivotal role in the quality of life of a community through the physical and mental health benefits of recreation and play, through opportunities for contact with nature and social interaction, and its contribution to creating a sense of place and community.

Conditions impacting on POS

The consideration of POS is subject to a range of changing social, environmental and economic conditions and there are inherent conflicts developing over the use, allocation, maintenance and cost of POS. There is a broad variation between local authorities in the application of *Liveable Neighbourhoods* with regard to the provision, distribution, development standards and maintenance periods of POS which results in a confusing array of standards and expectations to which the development industry has to respond. There is a wide variation in mandated maintenance periods which might be two years from practical completion, two summers or two winters, or three years and up to as much as five years where there is a water body. The lack of uniform standards creates uncertainty for the industry as development standards need to be tailored to each local authority.

Climate change is resulting in a cycle of reduced rainfall patterns, declining recharge of Perth's groundwater aquifers and increased abstraction for potable supplies which is leading to falling groundwater levels in many of Perth's shallow groundwater aquifers. The resultant water restrictions have an immediate impact on the design and usability of POS, particularly active POS, where playing fields may deteriorate due to declining availability of groundwater for irrigation.

Local authorities have to deal with critical water use and re-use issues including the threat of groundwater shortages, uncertainties around fit-for-source water re-use and inconsistencies in the issuing of abstraction licences. The few options available to developers when establishing POS are the use of scheme water, finding an appropriate alternative water source or radically changing the way parks are designed and landscaped by replacing turf with drought tolerant plants that do not rely on irrigation.

POS is also impacted by changing climatic conditions with predictions of higher temperatures as a result of climate change. This might force people indoors for recreation and sport rather than outdoor use of POS which may impact on the 10% requirement for POS.

Changing demographics and increased population densities also impact on open space planning as the drive for more, higher density living in both new and established areas raises the question of the sufficiency or otherwise of the 10% allocation. This argument may be balanced by decreasing household size however just what the future demand for POS might be in high density areas is yet to be fully understood. The ageing population is a further consideration and suggests POS will need to provide multiple functions with easy access to residential communities.

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Government policy framework

The *Liveable Neighbourhoods Community Design Code* provides the framework for the distribution of the open space provision within a neighbourhood. This includes the provision of local parks (of less than 0.3 ha), neighbourhood parks (0.3 –0.8 ha) and district parks (of 2.5 – 7.0 ha) with increasing sizes of walking catchments associated with each. Local authorities are not always favourably disposed towards small local parks citing high maintenance costs but the objective of the code is to provide intimate social spaces in new neighbourhoods. Local authorities in Perth's growth areas report a strong demand for more regional open space, particularly regional playing fields, and have reservations about the credit of wetlands, bushland, conservation and drainage areas in the calculation of POS. Co-location of POS with school sites in the interest of dual-use is now becoming a favoured option.

Industry supports the principles of the POS calculation model of *Liveable Neighbourhoods* but the requirement for detailed drainage information as part of a structure plan, rather than at subdivision stage, is particularly problematic with regards to the application of the POS calculation. An alternative model is needed that allows the high level land area to be determined at structure plan stage and the detail of drainage design at subdivision stage.

Directions 2031 and Beyond, forecasts the need for an additional 328,000 dwellings in Perth and Peel by 2031. The vision is for a world-class liveable city that is green, one that preserves the parks and bushland, lakes and wetlands. *Directions 2031* estimates an additional 20,300ha of additional land will be required in the Outer Sub-Regions if development achieves 15 dwelling units per gross urban hectare or 44,600ha where 10 units per gross urban hectare are achieved. This equates to the delivery of 2,000ha – 4,400 ha of POS which will be a challenge if we are to maintain natural habitats and provide for the additional POS given the competition for water and the current limited range of alternative sources for non-potable water use.

Cross-agency cooperation is germane to the successful design, delivery and maintenance of POS given the many stakeholders and at times conflicting agendas: Department of Sport and Recreation, Department of Education and Training, Department of Water, Department of Planning, Department of Environment and Conservation, local authorities. It is clear that a coordinated approach to the consideration of the future of POS is required, one that is responsive to multiple agendas, multiple uses and users and yet remains cognisant of the establishment costs and maintenance costs.

UDIA policy position

It is the policy of UDIA to:

- Advocate for and work with the government to develop a coordinated, cross-agency approach to identify the issues associated with POS and to develop actions to resolve them;
- Advocate for the removal of duplication of requirements and conflicting requirements between agencies;
- Support the principles of *Liveable Neighbourhoods* for POS allocation, distribution, development standards and maintenance;

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- Advocate for consistency in the application of *Liveable Neighbourhoods* across local authorities in the provision, distribution, development standard and maintenance periods of POS, as the basis for appeal in the State Administrative Tribunal;
- Support the development of an alternative model for POS calculation that allows the high level land area to be determined at structure plan stage and the detail of drainage design to be considered at subdivision stage;
- Advocate for the Western Australian Planning Commission to review DCP 2.3 Public Open Space in Residential Areas, SPP 2.8 Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region and SPP 2.6 State Coastal Planning Policy to understand their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the community;
- Advocate for the Department of Water to review the groundwater licensing system for irrigation of POS to ensure equity in access to groundwater between local government areas;
- Promote the need for water re-use on POS;
- Promote best management practice and water management systems to maximise water efficiencies in irrigation on POS;
- Promote the benefits of new advances in Water Sensitive Urban Design for water efficiency and design of POS to local government;
- Work with industry and government to improve the implementation of Water Sensitive Urban Design in POS areas;
- Provide the most up to date information available to members on demographic change and changes in density for POS through newsletters and fora;
- Provide the most up to date information available to members on climate change and adaptation strategies to counter the impact of climate change on POS through newsletters and fora.

This Position Statement articulates UDIA's current policy position and supersedes any other UDIA policy statement.

| Committee Review | Endorsed by Council | Policy Review |
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| | July 2011 | |
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