

e udia@udiawa.com.au
t 08 9321 1101
f 08 9321 1102
w www.udiawa.com.au

Urban Development Institute of Australia
(Western Australia)
Level 5, 150 St Georges Terrace,
Perth, Western Australia 6000



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Shire of Busselton
Locked Bag 1
BUSSELTON WA 6280

mersina.robinson@busselton.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms Robinson

Re: SHIRE OF BUSSELTON DRAFT LOCAL TOURISM PLANNING STRATEGY

The Urban Development Institute of Australia is pleased to provide feedback on the Shire's draft Local Tourism Planning Strategy. UDIA has an active membership operating in the South West comprised of professionals working in the planning, urban design, environmental, engineering, finance, legal and construction fields. The feedback provided in this letter is designed to alert the Shire of Busselton to potential shortcomings in the draft Tourism Planning Strategy.

UDIA has had ongoing involvement with tourism development policy in WA including representation on the Ministerial Tourism Taskforce and Tourism WA's Quality Tourism Committee. The consistent message that industry has put forward during this involvement is that current tourism policy in WA does not foster economically viable projects or successfully promote iconic tourism development.

UDIA supports the development of the Local Tourism Planning Strategy and believe we need to maximize the potential to create innovative, successful and sustainable tourism developments. This is both for the benefit of the economy and the community. The South West is in dire need of more quality tourism developments however the necessary investment in this sector will not occur unless these projects can be demonstrated to be financially viable.

Strategic Tourism Sites and Precincts

UDIA's key concerns with the draft Local Tourism Planning Strategy is the allocation of numerous Strategic Tourism Sites and Precincts. The strategy nominates 9 Strategic Tourism Precincts and 33 Strategic Tourism Sites where "development shall generally be for tourism purposes only" (page 32). The draft strategy acknowledges that "tourism development often cannot provide the same returns as residential development and therefore tourism opportunities require protection" (page 20).

The large number of strategic tourism sites and precincts within the Shire of Busselton is alarming as the Quality Tourism Committee suggested identifying just 12 strategic tourism sites, or Sites of Significance, for the whole of the state of Western Australia. The Shire's approach seems excessive and runs the risk of sterilizing large areas of land that will not realise its true value.

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It is our view and that of the Quality Tourism Committee that the Shire's approach will stifle innovation and will do nothing to attract investment where financial viability cannot be achieved. If tourism zones are to restrict or totally disallow permanent residential development, the amount of land dedicated to such zones should not be so extensive that the zone remains under-utilised to the detriment of the tourism experience. Another alternative is to have a broader planning zone with policy areas identifying locations for specific uses. This would provide a more strategic approach within the planning scheme with areas essentially being master planned to guide future development.

The Shire of Busselton should consider mixed use zones that accommodate both tourist accommodation and permanent accommodation as appropriate, particularly in urban areas. Many tourists enjoy the experience of living amongst the locals while on holiday.

UDIA supports the proposal to grant land tax exemptions or rebates to particular zones, for example caravan parks, as this goes some way to ensuring affordable tourism opportunities for the public however this must be approached with caution and not applied across the board.

Residential Contribution to Strategic Sites

It is difficult to secure funding for projects with a 100% short stay component. It is difficult to attract national and international investors to invest in new tourism projects in WA, largely due to the risk involved in developing a purely tourism project.

UDIA recommends that Strategic Tourism Sites should have the option of a residential component. UDIA understands that residential accommodation in some Strategic Tourism Sites is simply not appropriate. However, the Shire would be able to assess a development proposal on its merits and determine if a component of residential accommodation may be appropriate in that area.

Increased flexibility in Tourism Policy would benefit communities in areas such as the South West Region where tourism accommodation is at a premium. Not only will flexibility improve the viability of some projects, a certain ratio of residential accommodation can assist with creating vibrancy in an area throughout the year. Due to the cyclical nature of the tourism industry, there are many times during the year where purely tourist sites lay dormant. Permanent residents can assist with the sustainability of an area by shopping locally and using other local facilities throughout the year.

Non-Strategic Tourism Sites

Non Strategic Sites should not be limited to 25% residential accommodation component. UDIA supports a flexible approach to decision making in regard to Non Strategic Sites based on design principles rather than ratios.

UDIA has been provided with anecdotal evidence that a number of potentially iconic sites have been cancelled due to a lack of flexibility in regard to a permanent residential component. UDIA members do not believe that a rigid percentage based approach to decision making is in the best interest of good design outcomes on Non Strategic Sites.

It is our view that where a local planning strategy or scheme amendment report can satisfactorily demonstrate that 'tourism' is not the most appropriate zoning for a particular site, rezoning of non-strategic tourism sites to other uses should be supported.

We trust that you will give this feedback due consideration in your final deliberations and thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debra Goostrey'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'G'.

Debra Goostrey
Chief Executive Officer