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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PLANNING
COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF PLANNING POLICY No. 3

URBAN GROWTH AND SETTLEMENT

Prepared under section 5AA of the
Town Planning and Development Act 1928 (as amended)
by the Western Australian Planning Commission

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CONTENTS**1 Citation****2 Introduction and background****3 Application of the policy****4 Objectives of the policy****5 Policy measures**

- 5.1 Creating sustainable communities
- 5.2 Managing urban growth and settlement across Western Australia
- 5.3 Managing urban growth in Metropolitan Perth
- 5.4 Planning for liveable neighbourhoods
- 5.5 Coordination of services and infrastructure
- 5.6 Managing rural-residential growth
- 5.7 Planning for Aboriginal communities

6 Implementation

1. Citation

This *Statement of Planning Policy* is made under section 5AA of the *Town Planning and Development Act 1928*. This policy may be cited as *Statement of Planning Policy No. 3: Urban Growth and Settlement*.

2. Introduction and Background

This policy sets out the principles and considerations which apply to planning for urban growth and settlement in Western Australia. It is a broad sector policy under *Statement of Planning Policy No.1: State Planning Framework*. The policy will be implemented by more detailed policies on particular matters relating to planning for urban settlements that require additional guidance.

A high proportion of the population of Western Australia (over 90%) live in towns and cities. The pattern of settlement and quality of the urban environment is, therefore, highly significant to the lifestyle enjoyed by the population. A well planned and coherent settlement pattern and careful management of urban growth and change is critical in delivering wider social, economic and environmental objectives, for example, in providing choice in housing and lifestyle opportunities, easy access to employment, services and recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, a strong and shared sense of community, and good urban design and neighbourhood planning to create liveable, efficient and attractive communities.

Western Australia is a sparsely settled State. The majority of the population of around 2 million is concentrated south-west of a line between Lancelin and Albany. Metropolitan Perth is the focus of population and economic activity with a population of 1.5 million (including Peel). Other major population centres in the south-west are Bunbury, Busselton, Collie, Northam and Albany.

Elsewhere in the State, the pattern of settlement reflects the economic and social development of the different regions—predominantly mining and pastoralism in the north and east and agriculture in the mid-west and wheatbelt. This pattern is one of ports, fishing towns and holiday centres along the coast, remote mining towns in the north and east located at the source of mineral resources, and small towns scattered throughout the agricultural regions. Most of the population is concentrated in the major regional centres at Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Geraldton, Esperance, Carnarvon, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome and Kununurra.

The State is growing and changing. In the last 30 years the population has almost doubled to around 2 million and is expected to rise to 2.9 million by 2031. The most rapid growth is occurring in the Perth region and along the coast. The population of Metropolitan Perth including Peel is expected to reach 2.2 million by 2031 representing 76% of the estimated State population of 2.9 million.

There is continued pressure for development in coastal locations particularly for tourism projects, holiday homes and for people seeking a lifestyle change from city living. Often proposals for such development are deficient in employment and other services, and are also heavily car dependent. Coastal development needs to be carefully planned to ensure beaches, dunes, estuaries and coastal wetlands are protected, the risk of storm damage and shoreline erosion is carefully managed and urban development is located where it is feasible to provide essential infrastructure, employment, services and public transport. The Commission's *Statement of Planning Policy No. 2.6 State Coastal Planning Policy* sets out the principles for coastal planning and management and encourages concentration of urban development in and around existing settlements particularly those with established infrastructure and services.

In Metropolitan Perth and many of the regional cities and towns, much of the new development has been in the form of low density suburban growth. This pattern of growth was a response to consumer preferences and market forces of the time. Suburban development has reflected the collective wishes of households for the single detached house and garden, and unrestricted mobility.

There is increasing recognition that the spread of urban development intensifies pressures on valuable land and water resources, imposes costs in the provision of infrastructure and services, increases dependence on private cars and creates potential inequities for those living in the outer suburbs where job opportunities and services are not so readily available. Some suburbs lack a sense of community and people feel isolated. There are also costs involved because of the dependence on cars for meeting daily travel needs when it would be easier for people to walk or cycle to their destinations.

Whilst the majority preference is still for the suburban home, community expectations and preferences are also changing towards more compact patterns of development. Households are becoming more diverse. The population is ageing and there is an increasing proportion of smaller households seeking a wider range of housing types other than the conventional suburban home. More people are attracted to compact, mixed use developments freeing them from maintaining large gardens and dependency on the car. There is a greater interest in returning to established neighbourhoods.

In some existing suburbs there are factors which inhibit high density development such as the established neighbourhood character, available infrastructure and services and community sentiment. State and local governments, developers, service providers and the

community need to work together to support more consolidated development in appropriate locations where consistent with neighbourhood character and where the necessary services are available or can be provided.

In the new suburbs, there is an increasing drive to return to the traditional neighbourhood form with more of a sense of community as well as access to jobs, services and public transport.

The trend is to create more liveable communities in the new suburbs, revitalise and enhance neighbourhoods in existing urban areas, provide for variety in housing and living environments, widen the range of transport choices, conserve water and other natural resources, and provide for wider social interaction and opportunity.

Affordability of housing is a key issue. There is a need to maintain a supply of affordable land for housing and affordable housing products for all in the community including those with special needs. The majority of new affordable housing land is in the outlying suburbs reinforcing the need for medium and higher density housing in inner and middle suburbs for low to middle income households as well as in the growth corridors. There is also a need to design the built environment in a way which reduces the fear and incidence of crime and which enhances community pride.

In the regions, whilst the larger regional centres such as Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Broome and Esperance have continued to grow, some of the smaller country towns have declined due to reduced employment opportunities and social change as people have moved out of the rural settlements into urban centres.

In the mining and resource sector, improvements in mobility brought about by more cost effective travel, has seen the growth of the fly-in fly-out workforce often accommodated at mine sites. There are concerns that fly-in fly-out working arrangements do little to contribute to the local economy and the viability of regional towns and communities. The resources sector, however, regards fly-in fly-out as critical for remote mining operations and in attracting skilled workers. There is a need to promote investment in regional communities whilst recognizing that fly-in fly-out arrangements will often be necessary due to remoteness and to attract skilled workers.

The overall aim of the policy is to facilitate sustainable patterns of urban growth and settlement by setting out the requirements of sustainable settlements and communities and the broad policy in accommodating growth and change. This policy should be taken into account in preparing regional and local planning strategies, and planning schemes and amendments, and given weight in statutory decision making in relation to urban growth and settlement.

3. Application of the Policy

The policy applies throughout Western Australia.

4. Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of this policy are—

- To promote a sustainable and well planned pattern of settlement across the State, with sufficient and suitable land to provide for a wide variety of housing, employment, recreation facilities and open space.
- To build on existing communities with established local and regional economies, concentrate investment in the improvement of services and infrastructure and enhance the quality of life in those communities.
- To manage the growth and development of urban areas in response to the social and economic needs of the community and in recognition of relevant climatic, environmental, heritage and community values and constraints.
- To promote the development of a sustainable and liveable neighbourhood form which reduces energy, water and travel demand whilst ensuring safe and convenient access to employment and services by all modes, provides choice and affordability of housing and creates an identifiable sense of place for each community.
- To coordinate new development with the efficient, economic and timely provision of infrastructure and services.

5. Policy Measures

5.1 Creating sustainable communities

Sustainability is central to the planning system in Western Australia. Sustainability requires us to integrate the social, economic and environmental consequences of land use and development in order to deliver a better quality of life now and for future generations. The planning system is uniquely placed to influence the quality of life of communities because of its capacity to resolve conflicts and deliver solutions which balance social, economic and environmental objectives.

It is the policy of the Commission to create sustainable communities, that is, cities, towns and other places which provide for high levels of employment and economic growth; strong, vibrant and socially inclusive communities; effective protection of the environment; and the prudent use of resources.

The key requirements for sustainable communities are—

- a strong, diversified and sustainable economic base with assured access to jobs and employment;
- sufficient and suitable serviced land in the right locations for housing, employment, commercial, recreational and other purposes, coordinated with the efficient and economic provision of transport, essential infrastructure and human services;
- variety and choice in the size, type and affordability of housing to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes and which is responsive to housing demand and preferences;
- affordable land for housing and affordable housing products in both greenfield and brownfield locations to ensure the housing needs of all the community can be met including those with special needs;
- making the most efficient use of land in existing urban areas through the use of vacant and under-utilised land and buildings, and higher densities where these can be achieved without detriment to neighbourhood character and heritage values; the cost-effective use of urban land and buildings, schools and community services, infrastructure systems and established neighbourhoods; and promoting and encouraging urban development that is consistent with the efficient use of energy;
- directing urban expansion into designated growth areas which are, or will be, well serviced by employment and public transport;
- supporting higher residential densities in the most accessible locations, such as, in and around town and neighbourhood centres, high frequency public transport nodes and interchanges, major tertiary institutions and hospitals, and adjacent to high amenity areas such as foreshores and parks;
- clustering retail, employment, recreational and other activities which attract large numbers of people in existing and proposed activity centres at major public transport nodes so as to reduce the need to travel, encourage non-car modes and create attractive, high amenity mixed use urban centres;
- access for all to employment, health, education, shops, leisure and community facilities by locating new development so as to be accessible by foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to depend on access by car (whilst recognising the convenience of car travel for some trips and the limited potential to provide alternatives in rural and remote locations);
- good urban design which creates and enhances community identity, sense of place, liveability and social interaction in new and existing neighbourhoods;
- designing the urban environment in a way which reduces the opportunities for, and fear of, crime;
- proper consideration of the environment, recognising the need to restore and enhance as well as protect biodiversity and to minimise development impacts on land, water, energy, minerals, basic raw materials, agriculture and other natural resources that help sustain urban economies and society;
- a positive planning framework which seeks to actively facilitate and promote good quality development, rather than overly focussing on regulation and controls, in ways which contribute to economic growth, support safe, sustainable and liveable communities, and improve the quality of life, and with community involvement appropriate to the level of planning; and
- a focus on building partnerships between State and local government, service providers, industry groups, developers, businesses and the community in the planning and design of cities, towns and rural settlements.

The key elements of the *State Planning Strategy* are reinforced in this policy.

In the *State Planning Strategy*, future planning for the south-west of the State is encapsulated in the south-west urban system which is further refined and articulated in the strategy for Metropolitan Perth. The growth of Perth will be carefully managed with a shift away from urban expansion on the fringe of the city to the consolidation of established urban areas whilst still maintaining an adequate supply of land for development in the growth areas. Bunbury, Busselton and Albany will continue to develop as major centres. Land between the towns and cities will be conserved in rural use for agricultural production, landscape, conservation and lifestyle purposes.

For the regions, the *State Planning Strategy* promotes the consolidation and expansion of existing settlements to make regional communities sustainable in the long-term. There is likewise a need to avoid ad-hoc and disbursed new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements which are remote from existing and planned services and will create competition with towns better placed to accommodate growth and expansion.

New settlements and major town expansions should only be considered where they will have a planned economic and employment base and where they can be efficiently serviced by local and regional infrastructure including roads, public transport, water supply, sewerage, drainage, energy, local parks, schools, shops, recreational facilities and other services. Any substantial new development, whether a town expansion, or new settlement, should not

consist exclusively of housing but must be planned as a sustainable community with a mix of land uses including, employment, shops, open space, schools and other services. In the new development areas, the aim should be to achieve increases in average housing density and provide a range of housing types. Higher densities and mixed use development should be encouraged near public transport nodes and activity centres.

Outside the metropolitan region and the regional growth centres, proposals for major new settlements, whether by large scale additions to existing settlements or new free standing settlements, are unlikely to prove to be a sustainable development option given the difficulties in providing a secure employment base, the cost of providing the full range of new services and infrastructure, and the potential for diverting population and resources from existing settlements which could contribute to the decline of those settlements. New settlements are only likely to prove to be a sustainable development option where they address a significant shortfall of available housing land in the region, have a secure employment base, are large enough to support a range of local services including schools, shops and employment and there is no more sustainable alternative.

New settlements may be necessary to provide accommodation for mineral and resource projects in remote locations. For existing settlements, the preference is to accommodate the mining workforce in nearby communities, where the mine site is in reasonable proximity of the town, and there is available housing land, infrastructure and facilities. In this way the mining workforce will support the economy of the town and have access to the services and facilities which the town provides. It is recognized, however, that it may not always be practical to accommodate the mining workforce in existing communities. Regional and local planning strategies need to find a balance between accommodating the mining workforce in regional communities, and fly-in fly-out arrangements where necessary due to remoteness or labour shortages. State and local governments also need to consider the standard of available housing and access to education, health and recreation opportunities.

5.2 Managing urban growth and settlement across Western Australia

The *State Planning Framework*, which comprises the *State Planning Strategy*, regional and subregional strategies and other policy statements, will provide the direction for the future pattern of urban growth and settlement and the basis for decision making on urban development proposals. The *State Planning Framework* provides the context for statutory region schemes and local government schemes which must have regard to this framework in their preparation.

Regional strategies are prepared by the Commission and cover a region or sub-region. These generally have a planning horizon of 30 years. Regional strategies reflect and build on the policies and proposals set out in the *State Planning Strategy*. Regional strategies should provide clear guidance as to the future settlement pattern for the region and identify growth areas taking into account population and housing need over the period of the strategy and be consistent with the requirements of sustainable communities and development.

Settlements with growth potential should be identified in regional strategies having regard to economic and employment opportunities, accessibility, provision of services and essential infrastructure, and the capacity to accommodate growth whilst achieving good economic, social and environmental outcomes. Planning will support the development of these settlements to take advantage of the opportunities for growth.

The *Metropolitan Development Program* and *Country Land Development Program* respectively comprise land release plans for Metropolitan Perth and the larger towns and cities in the State. They provide clear guidance on urban land supply having regard to population growth, housing demand, residential lot requirements, the provision of services and infrastructure, capital works and programmes and financial arrangements. These land release plans assist the orderly and efficient development of urban land in the metropolitan region and in regional towns and cities by ensuring the timing of development is matched with the provision of infrastructure and community services.

Local planning strategies are the main framework for planning at the local level enabling local government to plan ahead. They express the strategic vision, policies and proposals of the local government and reflect local needs and aspirations. They are also the key instrument for translating State and regional plans and policies to the local level and provide the rationale for the zonings and other provisions in local government town planning schemes. Local strategies should reflect and build on the urban growth and settlement policies set out in regional strategies and the land release plans and apply these at the more detailed local level taking into account local needs and variations. Local strategies should seek to identify sufficient land to meet future population and housing needs for at least a 10 year period.

In preparing local planning strategies, local governments should assess housing demand and the type of additional housing for which they should plan. Local planning strategies should secure an appropriate mix of housing types in the light of housing demand and the changing composition of households. Local governments should adopt a systematic approach towards identifying locations suitable for new housing development, redevelopment and infill and opportunities for increased densities particularly around activity centres and close to public transport nodes.

The orderly planning of urban growth and settlement should be facilitated by structure plans, which should take into account the strategic and physical context of the locality, provide for the development of safe, convenient and attractive neighbourhoods which meet the diverse needs of the community, and facilitate logical and timely provision of infrastructure and services. Structure plans may consist of a hierarchy of plans ranging from broad district structure plans to more detailed plans for neighbourhoods and precincts.

Proposals for future urban growth will be determined having regard to—

- the *State Planning Strategy*, relevant statements of planning policy, and regional and subregional strategies in the *State Planning Framework*;
- population projections provided by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure;
- land release plans published by the Commission; and
- local planning strategies prepared by local government and endorsed by the Commission.

Speculative proposals for new urban subdivision and development in areas not identified in regional and local planning strategies and land release plans will not generally be supported.

In order to properly consider and evaluate major urban growth proposals consistent with this policy, the Commission may require proponents to provide a detailed assessment of the performance of the project in meeting regional planning and sustainability objectives. These will be based on an analysis of the consistency of the project with the regional planning framework and the achievement of economic growth, social advancement and conservation of environmental and natural resources. Key elements of the analysis will be the capacity to provide jobs and employment, the capital investment required for infrastructure and services (including contribution arrangements) and the overall costs and benefits of the proposal taking into account all of its social, environmental and economic impacts (which may be positive or negative). The methodology and data used in such analysis must be appropriate, transparent and verifiable, and may be used as part of a consultation concerning the proposal. Details of any established or proposed agreements or mechanisms underpinning implementation of the proposal should also be set out.

5.3 Managing urban growth in Metropolitan Perth

While effective management of urban growth is important throughout the State, it is critical for the sustainable future development of Metropolitan Perth.

Future metropolitan growth will be planned and managed in accordance with Network city.

Network city is the metropolitan strategy for Perth and Peel. It embodies the metropolitan land use strategy, the metropolitan transport strategy, a whole-of-Government approach, a commitment to partnerships with local governments and a commitment to plan with communities.

The key elements are—

- consolidating residential development in existing areas and directing urban expansion into the designated growth areas which are, or will be, well serviced by employment and public transport;
- giving priority to infill development in established urban areas, particularly through urban regeneration and intensification of development of under-utilised urban land, whilst respecting neighbourhood character ;
- locating higher residential densities in locations accessible to transport and services, such as in and around the CBD, regional and district centres, activity corridors and higher education campuses, and in selected areas of high amenity on the coast and river foreshores;
- concentrating commercial, health, education, entertainment and cultural developments in and around activity centres and corridors with good access to public transport and which are easily accessible for the catchment population;
- developing an integrated land use and transport network which reduces car dependence and broadens travel options, makes it easier for people to use public transport or walk or cycle to their destinations, and establishes defined transport corridors as the major network for the movement of goods and people;
- protecting biodiversity and areas of environmental significance, and promoting the concept of an interlinked system of regional and local open space; and
- protecting water resources, and reducing the use of non-renewable resources and waste generation.

5.4 Planning for liveable neighbourhoods

The Commission's *Liveable Neighbourhoods* policy intends that the neighbourhood should be the basic building block for urban development with interconnected and integrated neighbourhoods clustered into well defined towns and communities. New urban areas will be comprehensively planned as sustainable communities which provide local facilities, services, public transport and job opportunities within easy reach by walking or cycling, reducing dependence on the private car for travel. In addition to meeting day to day needs, neighbourhoods will be designed to build a strong sense of place and community by providing

for a mix of housing types and households, creating the opportunity for social interaction and designing at a human scale so that streets are attractive, convenient and safe public spaces.

The *Liveable Neighbourhoods* principles apply to the preparation and review of regional and district structure plans for new growth areas, local structure plans for new subdivisions, and in planning for the revitalisation or redevelopment of existing areas. These principles are—

- a sense of community and strong local identity and sense of place in neighbourhoods and towns;
- an urban structure of walkable neighbourhoods clustered to form towns of compatibly mixed uses in order to reduce car dependence for access to employment, retail and community facilities;
- access generally by way of an interconnected network of streets which facilitate safe, efficient and pleasant walking, cycling and driving;
- safe and convenient access to services and facilities designed for all users, including users with disabilities;
- active street frontages with buildings facing streets to improve personal safety through increased surveillance and activity;
- new development which supports the efficiency of public transport systems where available, and provides safe, direct access to the system for residents;
- mixed use urban development which provides for a wide range of living, employment and leisure opportunities capable of adapting over time as the community changes, and reflects appropriate community standards of health, safety and amenity;
- a variety of lot sizes and housing types to cater for the diverse housing needs of the community at a density that can ultimately support the provision of local services;
- subdivision and housing types which can adapt to changing needs and accommodate gradual intensification;
- the protection of key environmental areas and the incorporation of significant cultural and environmental features of a site into the design of an area;
- an integrated approach to the design of open space and urban water management; and
- cost-effective and resource-efficient development to promote affordable housing.

5.5 Coordination of services and infrastructure

Planning for new growth and settlements should be co-ordinated with the cost-efficient provision of infrastructure and services such as roads, public transport, water supply, sewerage, electricity, gas, telecommunications, drainage, open space, schools, health and recreational facilities.

Regional and local strategies and plans should identify land required for future transport routes, infrastructure, community services and facilities. Transport and other infrastructure with off-site impacts should be separated from residential and other sensitive uses. Infrastructure and service providers need to be consulted early in the process to ensure that service delivery is co-ordinated with new development.

While there are clear costs in providing services on the urban fringe, there may also be significant costs and long lead times in upgrading existing infrastructure capacity in existing urban areas to serve higher densities. The construction of service infrastructure may also be disruptive to local communities. Infrastructure providers will need to be consulted for advice on the practicality, costs and funding of infrastructure services.

The Commission's land release plans should be used to guide the programming of new development on greenfield and major infill/redevelopment sites in the metropolitan region and regional towns and cities to ensure the timely provision of infrastructure and services.

Developer contributions for infrastructure should be made in accordance with Commission policy. In areas of fragmented land ownership, consideration should be given to cost-sharing among owners to ensure the equitable funding of infrastructure.

Developer contributions should be consistent with the principles of need, nexus, equity and accountability and should always take account of housing affordability.

Greenfield developments that leapfrog the existing urban front should be required to pre-fund extensions to infrastructure, including extensions to major roads and utility networks, that would otherwise be provided by service providers. There will, however, be scope for negotiated agreements between developers and State and local government regarding funding of major infrastructure for out-of-sequence development, particularly for land which is zoned for urban development, and taking into account land supply and land assembly constraints. Consideration may also need to be given to the need for contributions, which are necessary and reasonable to fund public operational and maintenance costs arising from such development.

5.6 Managing rural-residential growth

Rural-residential living is an important component of the settlement pattern in rural areas of the State. Rural-residential development also provides for lifestyle choice and has the potential to revitalise rural communities.

Rural-residential development, however, can have a range of negative impacts. Hobby farms and rural homesites can present potential conflicts with other land uses and rural resources such as water catchments, basic raw materials, conservation areas and outstanding landscapes. There are also pressures placed on State and local governments for services and infrastructure which are difficult to provide economically because of the dispersed pattern of subdivision. In the metropolitan region and around towns and cities in the regions, rural living development can also limit opportunities for future urban development by fragmenting land, and making land assembly and the provision of services more difficult and costly.

There is a need, therefore, to locate and design rural-residential settlements in a sustainable way which is integrated with the overall pattern of settlement.

The Commission's *Statement of Planning Policy No.2.5: Agricultural and Rural Land Use Planning* applies to the zoning of land for rural-residential development. Planning for rural-residential development should—

- avoid productive agricultural land, important natural resources, areas of high bush fire risk or environmental sensitivity;
- avoid future urban areas or areas particularly suitable for urban development in terms of their characteristics and proximity to urban services;
- give preference to locations near existing settlements with available services and facilities in order to support the local community and avoid locations where services are not available or costly extensions are necessary;
- minimise potential for conflict with incompatible activities associated with productive rural uses or natural resource management;
- only include locations which are suitable for this type of development, such as land which is topographically varied, visually attractive and with distinctive environmental attributes or otherwise has potential for lifestyle pursuits; and
- take a realistic approach by allocating land based on forecast estimates of demand for rural living not on the speculative development of land.

5.7 Planning for Aboriginal communities

Whilst many Aboriginal people live in closely settled rural or urban areas, there are many who live in townships and settlements which are Aboriginal managed communities.

The Commission oversees the state-wide *Planning for Aboriginal Communities* project which involves preparing community layout plans to guide the location of new houses and community buildings for the larger, permanent and more remote Aboriginal communities. The Commission's *Statement of Planning Policy No.3.2: Planning for Aboriginal Communities* provides the planning framework for the preparation of community layout plans and their incorporation into town planning schemes.

In considering community living areas, proposals for new settlement will only be supported where the proposed settlement—

- has an identified and sustainable drinking water source;
- is not subject to inundation from river or creek floodings;
- has a reasonable level of access to essential services including transport, health and education; and
- the landholding is of a sufficient size to accommodate a living area and all associated community infrastructure such as a water bore, sewerage ponds, rubbish tip and power supply.

6. Implementation

Implementation of this policy will be through related statements of planning policy, regional strategies, local planning strategies and regional and local planning schemes. Implementation will also occur through the day-to-day process of decision-making on rezoning, structure plans, subdivisions and development applications, and the actions of other State agencies in carrying out their responsibilities.

State agencies and local government will need to take into account this policy to ensure integrated decision making in planning for urban growth and settlement.



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