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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Reference: Sustainable cities

TUESDAY, 6 APRIL 2004

BRISBANE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Tuesday, 6 April 2004

Members: Mr Billson *(Chair)*, Ms George *(Deputy Chair)*, Mr Barresi, Mr Cobb, Mr Hunt, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Mr Lindsay, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur.

Members in attendance: Mr Billson, Ms George and Mr Jenkins

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Issues and policies related to the development of sustainable cities to the year 2025, particularly:

- The environmental and social impacts of sprawling urban development;
- The major determinants of urban settlement patterns and desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;
- A 'blueprint' for ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement, with particular reference to eco-efficiency and equity in the provision of services and infrastructure;
- Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and
- Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 12.40 p.m.

BRUCE, Mr Greg Allan, Manager, Environmental Management Services, Townsville City Council

BUNNELL, Mrs Ann, Deputy Mayor, and Chair, Environmental Services, Townsville City Council

CURRIE, Ms Dyan Elizabeth, Manager, Development Assessment, Toowoomba City Council; and Member, Planning Working Group, South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils

HOFFMAN, Mr Greg, Director, Policy and Representation Branch, Local Government Association of Queensland

RICKETTS, Mr Mark Richard, Senior Officer, Waste and Sustainability, Brisbane City Council

ROBBINS, Councillor Susan, Councillor, Division 14, Gold Coast City Council

WIGHT, Mr Wallace Vernon, Coordinator, Northern Subregional Organisation of Councils

CHAIR—Welcome. This is the ninth hearing of this inquiry. What we have done in other locations is bring together people with interesting thoughts and perspectives. There is a lot of interest in the inquiry and a lot of feelings, and we are trying to distil that down into a blueprint, a course of action that we can pursue. Part of that is having an exchange—a chat, a bit of a frank fireside conversation—with you guys at the coalface. Thank you very much for coming along and making your time available. This is somewhat informal, but we still do need to call you as witnesses. Consequently, this constitutes activities of the parliament, so we would like you to not make any false or misleading statements—as you are probably aware, that is a serious issue and may be regarded as contempt. On that bright and cheery note, though, we are hopeful that you will be forthcoming with your input. We have not had too many problems with false and misleading statements. We have had a lot of differing points of view, but they are fine and they are welcomed. Do any of you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Wight—The Northern Subregional Organisation of Councils, or NORSROC, is made up of the seven local governments immediately north of Brisbane.

Councillor Robbins—I am also the chair of the southern planning committee, the nature conservation stakeholders group and the urban design advisory committee.

Mr Ricketts—I handle the policy direction for waste and sustainability in Brisbane City Council.

Mrs Bunnell—I also chair HESROC, which is a regional organisation of six councils in our area.

CHAIR—Thank you all for coming. We will go through some general conversation about your convictions around sustainability and your organisations. We will talk about why you are involved in the debate, along with some of the particular things that your organisations are doing or that you think others should be doing. Then we will drill down into some specific steps that you think the Commonwealth should take and what kind of a role you hope the Commonwealth could play into the future. Dyan, could you start by giving us a couple of sentences on what you think we can learn from your experience and the gee-whizery that is going on in your part of the world? We think there is good practice happening around the place.

Ms Currie—There certainly is.

CHAIR—We would be grateful if you could very briefly share with us some of the things in your part of the world, and we will skate around the other representatives as well before hopping into it.

Ms Currie—From a professional perspective and also in representing the SEQROC group, I think there is some very interesting and valuable work. The SEQROC group, in particular, took a very strong interest in the inquiry; hence our submission. We recognise that there are a number of challenges facing all levels of government. As an organisation of local government we have recognised quite specific funding and coordination challenges between local governments and between local governments and state government, and then in bringing in the Commonwealth role. From our perspective, the project that I think is worthy of the inquiry's attention is the south-east corner's regional planning program, 2021, where we are trying to establish clear goals of sustainability that are achievable and measurable and will have an impact at local, state and, potentially, federal level. The federal government is of course involved in that project, but it has a minor role. That is a foundation project that we think is very important.

CHAIR—We will come back to you for more on that. Ann, would you like to add something?

Mrs Bunnell—Townsville City has been involved in issues of sustainability since the late eighties. We began with what we call the RIKES report. It was the foundation for our 1994 city plan. We have done environmental conservation strategies. We are currently facilitating Townsville's sustainability planning program and we are having a workshop with all of the leaders of the community to see where we can go with the whole issue of sustainability. We have done a lot of work in this area. We believe that the future of sustainability is an interconnectedness of disciplines—using the strengths within a community. We are also desperate for funding from the federal government in that area. So we are hoping to be able to give you a picture of Townsville. It is the largest city in the tropics and it has particular problems that I would like to discuss with you today.

CHAIR—Mr Lindsay does a great job in the parliament of reminding us that it is paradise up there, so it will be good to hear your perspective too. Mark, would you like to say something?

Mr Ricketts—Brisbane City Council have taken a similar route to most others in that we have had an environmental perspective for quite some time that has evolved into more of an ecoefficiency view of the world. Now we are trying to embrace the immigration that Ann just talked about, involving social and economic issues. We are trying to come up with how we feed that into a budgetary prioritisation. We are finding that very difficult.

CHAIR—In terms of making a business case for the investment?

Mr Ricketts—In terms of the trade-offs and how we might get the best bang for the buck in those sorts of things. It was hard enough in the environment context to trade off a public transport system with a sewage treatment upgrade but when you start to feed in social and economic factors, often with poor data, things become very challenging. But I have to say that the regional planning process is a major opportunity for our region. There is one thing that SEQROC has now come to realise: it is not Brisbane and it is not the Gold Coast; we are actually in an emerging conurbation and, if we do not do things together, we are all going to sink together.

CHAIR—Sue, would you like to add something?

Councillor Robbins—We are very much part of SEQROC in that process as well. We have got fairly specific problems in that we are the fastest-growing region in Australia. We have a population of 500,000—and that includes the 70,000 people per day who visit our city—and we have an area of 1,451 square kilometres. We have incredible biodiversity in that we have an overlap region of the subtropical zone and the temperate zone, and we have an area that is still 50 per cent green space, if you like. Around 27 per cent of that is covered in some way by some sort of preservation order or preserved in some form, but one of our biggest challenges is to try to preserve our Australian lifestyle without diminishing the future of our ecosystems. That is a major problem for us—it is a huge challenge.

We have put in place a lot of strategies. Through the Royal Australian Planning Institute we have received a number of awards, both nationally and state wide, for many of our strategies—our bushfire management strategy, our Guragunbah flood plain strategy, our nature conservation strategy and so on. We have spent millions and millions of dollars of ratepayers' money in putting these strategies in place and then developing these policies and implementing them throughout the city, but what we are finding is that we cannot provide the necessary public transport road infrastructure to our community with the 4c in the tax dollar that local governments get. It is very difficult.

Because we do not have a capital city status—that is comfortably retained by Brisbane, although we are giving them a bit of a nudge—we also do not attract regional city status. So we slip between the cracks, and because of that we are not getting appropriate funding, we believe. The Brisbane capital receives a large percentage of the federal government funding. What we are putting to you today is that we need recognition of the size and of the issues that we are faced with and the fact that we need direct state government funding. We believe the state government will be opposing that, but we believe we need direct funding from the federal government to implement some of our much needed infrastructure. When it gets allocated to the state it goes into this Brisbane vortex of a capital city and we do not see much of it at all.

CHAIR—A spirited opening—thanks, Sue.

Mr Hoffman—The Local Government Association is the peak body representing all councils in Queensland and we play a role in promoting and supporting the system of local government in its ability to undertake its responsibilities across the whole range of matters that come within local government's jurisdiction. On the issue of sustainability, we have played a part over the

past decade in the amendment of or creation of a number of key pieces of legislation in this state that go to the heart of the issue of sustainability—our planning legislation, environmental protection legislation, coastal protection, vegetation management and water act. They are all relevant to this business and seek to address increasingly the issue of sustainability.

For us it is, reflecting upon the comments made earlier, a case of trying to pull together those disparate and often quite conflicting elements of how you deal with the economic, environmental and social aspects of it. Maybe I have overread some of the references in the terms of reference and in your discussion paper, but they suggest to me that the issue is not being seen as broadly as we would perhaps argue it needs to be, but I am happy to discuss that later.

From our perspective what we would want to see out of this exercise is an appropriate recognition of the role that local government plays, not only in the context of its responsibilities that exist under state legislation but also the responsibilities that local governments have to their community, which may or may not easily sit within state legislation. They have a lot to do in terms of their own policy, programming and funding commitments. But I would certainly like to see this exercise build on the fact that you only achieve an appropriate outcome if there is the right mix between Commonwealth, state and local government and that it would be counterproductive if the Commonwealth sought to develop a response and sought to impose some regime, some framework that did not recognise state and local involvement, but which also needed to recognise that this nation is very different from east to west, north to south. Picking up on geographic references, there is a very significant difference between the Mornington Peninsular and Mornington Island. I think that is an important scene setter I would like to make in addressing the issues today.

CHAIR—I can assure you that we have had many local government submissions saying, 'Give us the cash and we'll spend it wisely.' We need to work beyond that somehow. It probably comes as no surprise that we have heard that as we travel around the country.

Mr Hoffman—You might notice that I did not mention money.

CHAIR—No. I just say it was nicely finessed, but at the heart of it there is the strong message, 'If we had more cash we could do more good.'

Mr Wight—Our NORSROC area comprises probably three major communities of interest. A component of it is part of the expansion of the Brisbane metropolitan area, and it is subject to a lot of the sorts of growth pressures that fringe metropolitan areas all around Australia are subject to. Another community of interest is the urban part of the Sunshine Coast, which is emerging, as is the Gold Coast, as almost a metropolis in its own right but without the management and infrastructure needed for it to be sustainable in that transition. There are some tensions associated there with the different interests within that area, with some seeing it as an emerging metropolis and others trying to protect the fishing village ambience of it—and there are some incredible challenges there.

The other interest is that of what we call the Sunshine Coast hinterland, which is the largely rural area that backs up the two more urbanised parts of the local authority areas. But it is suffering a lot of the same pressures that other fringe rural areas are. There is the difficulty of the size of land parcels not being economic for traditional agricultural pursuits, the pressures of

urban development on land values, the removal of services from the rural towns and the drift of populations, particularly the younger population, away from the rural areas in search of education and employment opportunities. Given the diversity and the values that we hold through that area, we celebrate our diversity, but we are also very conscious that if we simply yield to the pressures that are upon us the outcomes will not be sustainable. We are very keen to use processes such as the SEQ 2021 regional planning process to find more sustainable outcomes.

CHAIR—Let us talk about the SEQ process. Was that a recognition that we just cannot keep going about things in the way we were? We have heard about this in submissions and when some people have come to the table. In local government terms it is post total quality management and we have past performance enhancement and this is the latest fashion, and some people are saying you have to be on that train. That seems not to be quite what we are aiming for, but there are many others that are saying that we are seeing the downsides of not doing this sustainability thing well. Those errors or pressures or conflicts or costs or lifestyle outcomes are what is driving us to find a better way of maintaining something we value. With the SEQ process, what brought the people to the table? Was it essentially just getting overrun and that there were social tensions because it was not being done well?

Ms Currie—I think this particular version of the project is the second time around. There is an existing regional plan that has been updated. But coming to the table this time I think the process itself has a very different flavour and, in an effort to try and ensure that that is clear to both the participants and the community, we have had some fascinating projection mapping done saying, 'Look, if we just continue to do exactly what we are doing now, this is how much is urban today and this is what it will be like in another 10 years and then again in another 20 years.' Watching both the participants and the general public's reaction to that—to the loss of the green space, to the continuing dependence on cars and the impacts of those roads—certainly changes their understanding and their willingness to participate.

There is a very strong feeling in the south-east region at the moment of wanting to protect the way of life—that absolutely beautiful way of life of living in this area—but trying to cope with the fact that, as Councillor Robbins said, there are 70,000 people a day moving in and out and we have massive numbers of people moving to the south-east region. I think the current projections are that within the next 15 years this area will be the second largest urban area in Australia; it will overtake Melbourne and one in seven Australians will live in this area. That is fascinating for us to deal with in terms of competing pressures: agricultural land needs to be preserved, green space needs to be preserved, but people need somewhere to live. At the moment it is cheaper and easier for the urban sprawl to continue, if you do not look at the whole cost of that process.

CHAIR—What is different about this second incarnation of the plan compared to the first one? I thought you were going to talk to us about how the first one talked about a dormitory picture of where everyone was going to live, and then the penny dropped—unless there are places for people to work, to recreate, be educated and live a fulfilling, rounded life, they are going to be unhappy folk who will spend half their life in a car.

Ms Currie—Certainly that is the process this time around. What has been identified is a number of key issues. They cover a range of factors: location of employment; transport;

regionally agreed infrastructure plans, so that things then follow on from that; protection of people's particular qualities of life and what it is that they are trying to do; an agreed framework for regional growth in terms of location of employment centres, business centres, shopping centres—all those sorts of things; and at a high scale, not at a local scale. This time around, what has been happening has been that both the levels—local government and state government—have been participating, some slightly more than others, and looking at what those issues are and sparking public debate. The public debate process through the *Courier-Mail* has recently won a national planning award, because it has raised the public's understanding of the importance of green space in particular to them, but also the problems of how you fund that equitably. You cannot just say, 'Let's put it all in a national park.' Who is going to pay for that?

CHAIR—So you took very localised concerns about the future and scaled up the dimensions of the problem to bring other levels of government in and—

Ms Currie—Yes, and asked them the questions and actually said, 'What happens if we don't protect that open space?' For example, what happens when we are simply urban land with everybody driving in cars from Noosa down to the southern border and out to Toowoomba?

CHAIR—So how are the regular folks involved in that, or was this just planners running amok, with civil engineers having their fantasies of new infrastructure coming out of our ears?

Ms Currie—Planners never run amok—never.

Mr Hoffman—Can I just give a little bit of history and context? The regional planning process that has been in operation in Queensland probably has its genesis back in the late seventies with the change of government when the first Goss government was elected, which was when the process of seeking to bring together the parties, the players, in a regional context first started. That gave birth to regional planning processes reflected in state legislation, reflected in—

CHAIR—Were they like overlays on your local planning schemes or were they embedded—

Mr Hoffman—They were big picture visions which provided, if you like, a basis for local planning processes to achieve those outcomes in the wider context of what was needed in a regional sense. So legislative processes emerged. SEQROC as a regional group was established in response to that. SubROC started and the process got under way, and similarly along the coast other areas established regional planning frameworks that brought together numbers of local government as well as state government predominantly, but particularly in the south-east corner the process of the development of that first plan took quite some lengthy period of time and involved very widespread consultations across community groups, all ranges of interest groups—

CHAIR—So there is quite a literacy in the community around regional planning?

Mr Hoffman—Yes.

Councillor Robbins—Without a doubt.

Mr Wight—Some of the background to that is that in the mid-1970s the state government engaged consultants to develop a regional plan. That regional plan was technically probably quite a good plan, but when it was completed and put on the table no-one owned it because no-one had had any input into it. I think it was the realisation that nobody owned the plan so no-one had a commitment to its implementation that led them to realise that the next generation had to be a plan that was developed in partnership with the three levels of government and the non-government sector. The plan that was produced from a community conference in 1990 and finally produced in 1995 was very much owned by all of the participants that were in it.

CHAIR—Were there new things in it? Did it go past just the land use planning stuff and people said, 'Well, hang on; there are other dimensions that need to be worked into this strategy to make it work and people need to be talked to'?

Mr Wight—Some of that grew with progressive iterations. For instance, when the plan first came in, it did not have an economic development component to it; that was added on. It was reviewed every couple of years and with each review it added additional elements. It suffered very much on the community strengthening side until it had an agency that was willing to put its hand up as the lead agency for the community strengthening component of it. In the latest iteration, it began to recognise the Indigenous role within the management of the region and so on. So it has been an evolving thing.

CHAIR—So when did stuff like Susan's green space issue—the biodiversity and lifestyle considerations: 'I'll have a nice McMansion but I'll have a crappy life'—start emerging? When did it start to be, 'Hang on, there's more to my life than just where the house is sited and how far I am from the nearest shopping centre'? Did all those things start to permeate up through the conversation with the community, or was that driven more by the levels of government saying, 'Hey, what about these other considerations?'

Mr Ricketts—Partly I think it was a consequence of that in that we have seen a push for increasing densification and all those sorts of sensible things.

CHAIR—You would be feeling that more than most though, wouldn't you, in the CBD?

Mr Ricketts—I think the Greenstreet program has impacted on everybody.

Mrs Bunnell—All of us.

Mr Ricketts—What we have to an extent is a planning and sustainability process that is ahead of popular perception. There is still the sort of feeling that says, 'I want to be able to play cricket in my backyard.' So there is that element that has not kept up with the planning process. I want to add to that first iteration of regional planning that I think everybody, or at least the governments concerned, did not feel bound by that first process and there were spectacular departures from that planning process.

CHAIR—So it was advisory only?

Councillor Robbins—It was a framework.

Mr Ricketts—Given that, I think this time around there is a much stronger commitment, whether it turns out to be mandatory or with some more firm binding of the governments involved and hopefully including the federal government.

Mr Hoffman—It certainly will be mandated in that proposals by the government leading into the recent state election are now outcomes flowing from that in terms of development.

CHAIR—How is that being operationalised?

Mr Hoffman—It is about to be operationalised with an office of urban development or urban growth management.

CHAIR—With referral powers from your planning agencies or with a state section of the planning scheme overseeing the more local ordinance stuff?

Mr Hoffman—The latter, in that there are already referral processes built into the Integrated Planning Act where state interests need to be addressed. But this is going further in that the regional planning process will in fact have statutory provisions, and it has gone from the previous advisory framework leadership type role to the imposition of some statute and some controls. I guess we will be looking with much interest at how far that drills down into the processes that will impact on what happens at the local level.

CHAIR—Sue, how do you see that affecting the work you guys are doing?

Councillor Robbins—I think that can have some major issues in relation to specific areas and specific regions. The issues that we are confronted with are not necessarily the same issues that Townsville is dealing with. It needs some flexibility. If it is going to be made a statutory policy or framework, it is very difficult for regions such as the Gold Coast, which is incredibly green really, to be able to manage our issues under those sorts of guidelines. I would hate to think that they were going to be very rigid.

Mrs Bunnell—Could I just make a comment, please? I am starting to feel that this is very south-east driven—

CHAIR—I will make sure it will not be that way.

Mrs Bunnell—which inevitably happens in Queensland, because we are decentralised.

CHAIR—You have your sustainability strategy; I am curious about how that was developed.

Mrs Bunnell—I would like to make a comment about some of the things that have been said. I think Queensland has suffered terribly from having no statute and no regulation. We have had no heritage framework or laws for years. We introduce them in our own planning schemes but they really have no teeth. Our heritage council has no teeth. These are all issues of sustainability. I believe we need some regional planning. Having tea and bickies and talking about what our needs are really does not take us very far. I think it has to be done in a regulatory way so that we can progress this. In Townsville we have done a huge amount of work on sustainability and working with our community. We do public-private projects—we believe in that. We believe in

the economic benefits of sustainability, as well as the social and cultural benefits. These are things that are crucial to all our communities.

CHAIR—What do the folks in Townsville think when you are talking to them about sustainability? Where do they fit into that conversation?

Mrs Bunnell—What we are trying to do with our community is educate them on sustainability. They want their koalas—we too have koalas. They want decent public transport. But they are not quite sure of the costs that sustainability will bring. I think it makes no sense for any of us to talk about sustainability of the cities of 2025 without talking about educating our community to the fact that we will have to give up some things to achieve that. Look at the conflict in the local government elections two weeks ago, and if you want conflict you just need to look at Brisbane. It reflects that the public are not quite sure how they are going to achieve their wants, whether they are on the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast or in Townsville. But we suffer terribly in North Queensland from the great south-east corner emphasis.

Councillor Robbins talked about the money going to Brisbane. She should come up to North Queensland and see how much it is diluted by the time it gets here. I noticed that this gentleman talked about the area north of Brisbane. I think he was talking about the Sunshine Coast. We have a thousand kilometres and we are still not up to the tip of Australia. If you are serious—and I am sure you are; that is why you have come here today—you have to look at the great diversity of Queensland and the real problems we have had with almost no regulation. We have stumbled on and done it, and some of us have done it very well, but our communities are the things that we must be protecting to make sure that they have a sustainable future.

CHAIR—What has been useful about this conversation—and we need to come to Mark about Brisbane City's experience—is that most other capital cities hyperventilate at your good fortune at having a metropolis-wide municipality which should present some regional planning opportunities that are not available elsewhere. What we have been trying to draw out where we have heard of similar experiences elsewhere is the process of engaging people and canvassing possibilities and forecasting what the consequences of bad choices today might look like down the track. That has been presented to us as almost as important as the strategy itself, if there is some help there finding common ground.

We have heard that a sustainability strategy became a replacement for another failed attempt at putting in a new town planning scheme—it was in New South Wales, so no disrespect intended—with the white shoe brigade wanted to subdivide every little bit that was not cliff front, but they were running into people that wanted to actually raise a family and then others who actually wanted to live in the place and therefore work. Then by the time you got people talking about those shared aspirations there was a lot of common ground. The hard tools—being the statutory planning tools, the economic strategy and social community capacity building—just kind of fell out quite clearly when that conversation was had at the beginning to bring out what mattered to people in those neighbourhoods. And that seemed more important than having a prescriptive plan. It was put to us that the feds should resource that kind of conversation and make sure the powers within local government involve people in that exercise.

Councillor Robbins—Bruce, one of the good things that came out of the federal government some time ago was the Better Cities Program. It was an excellent program. I believe that many

local governments right throughout Queensland and Australia—and I have been to a number of local government conferences on planning discussions—would hail the Better Cities Program as a program that helped with infrastructure and supported local governments throughout the nation. It was an initiative of the federal government. The Gold Coast actually received a heavy gauge rail line to Robina through that program. That line has not gone all the way to the border yet, and we would very much like to see it go all the way to the border, but now we have a rail link from Robina through to Brisbane and it is enormously successful.

We on the Gold Coast think the federal government could develop another program like a national cities policy. So local governments and regions could make a submission to that particular board under that policy and then they would have an opportunity, in conjunction with perhaps their state government, to get some assistance. That would help our emerging urban regions, and let us face it: these urban regions are the regions that are drawing the funds and making the money for state and federal governments. It is where the income is coming from. I suppose what we are looking for is some return of that payment.

CHAIR—Mark, in your city's experience, with all the regional planning that is going on around you—and I suppose it involves you with certain assumptions about what Brisbane's function in all that will be—what have you seen in terms of how your own planning articulates with the north and the south and beyond in the regional centres? Is there much new coming through from you, or has your scale pushed you into some of this stuff anyway without really knowing it?

Mr Ricketts—We are not an island, big though we are, and that is probably the big lesson that is coming through for Brisbane. With the massive growth in the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba, people are travelling daily to Brisbane to work. I think one other thing that has focused all of our minds on this issue is the incredible cost of retrofit—whether it is a house and you are putting in insulation after you have put everything together or whether it is a city and you are trying to put in a mass transit after everybody has built. It is just an insane—

Mr Hoffman—Bus lanes.

Mr Ricketts—Exactly. That is a major political issue now.

CHAIR—We got a taste of them on the way in.

Mr Ricketts—Some of those can be done but, by and large, they come at an incredible political and financial cost, which is driving us to better planning. Places like the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast can look at Brisbane and think, 'There but for the grace of God go we, so we'd better plan ahead.' With these sorts of impacts, we find that the infrastructure is a lost leader. You have to put in the public transport first. You have to put in the sewerage first. You cannot wait until you have degraded your waterways and then, when you have got critical mass and the rate base to pay for it, put in more infrastructure. It is not like a normal market where you can say, 'My new product is a new sewerage treatment plant' or a new bus system. Things like that have to be in from day one. If you are going to set travel patterns and habitation patterns, all that stuff needs to be in there from day one with one person.

Ms GEORGE—Where is that actually happening locally?

Mr Ricketts—It rarely does.

CHAIR—The gap is horrendous as well.

Mr Ricketts—Yes. Sewerage is a classic example. New South Wales has a much stronger regulatory regime about growth and tying it to sewerage upgrades. Queensland has come up to speed a lot in the last 10 years, I guess, but we are still in a situation where most of the sewerage treatment plants need massive upgrades to bring them to compliance and to address the degradation that is already occurring, rather than taking them to a new level of sustainability. We are trying to address the problems of the past with most of our infrastructure rather than being ahead of the game.

CHAIR—So you have got volume issues rather than quality issues.

Mr Ricketts—Both.

CHAIR—Ann, what is happening in Townsville?

Mrs Bunnell—I have two comments on that. Mark's comment about the sewerage upgrade is very pertinent. On Magnetic Island, which is a World Heritage island, we have currently put in a state-of-the-art sewerage treatment plant for waste water. You can literally drink the water that comes out of the treatment plant. The reality is that there has been no federal and very little state funding to bring that to the standard required for something around the Great Barrier Reef. Yet the people on the island will not be able to afford to link into the sewerage treatment plant. We are in a real quandary about how to finance this. Again, as Mark said, you are going to have to take things away from people to allow this to happen. When I came on to council in 1988, we would have got very healthy subsidies from both federal and state governments to do these major infrastructure works. That no longer happens. We had to rebuild our strand. There was no federal funding for that, for example.

CHAIR—But you will never get the feds buying out the need for governments to make choices though.

Mrs Bunnell—But the federal government always saw a role—whether it was in grant money or project money—in financing these huge infrastructure things. The other thing I want to talk about is the 50,000-person satellite city we are planning in Townsville in a beautiful area. We have done all our growth option studies; we have done all the preparation. We really want to make it a city that can be sustainable into the future. The developers are already saying that they cannot afford the imposition that we are going to be putting on them to have a sustainable environmental city. Very few places in Australia have a thing like Homebush, where the environmental aspects were looked after by a big brother.

We have a great opportunity in the satellite city to build a city that we all want in the future, but where are we going to get the funding from? Our only funding base is rates. Already you will find in most councils in Queensland that people feel they pay too much in rates. They pay a lot more than the other states because we look after so many of the services that in other states the state governments provide. Perhaps that is something to do with our decentralisation. I think you

really have to underline that, if you are taking anything away from Queensland and what needs to be done.

Mr JENKINS—Can we explore this problem of the developers saying it costs too much. At the end of the day, they are saying that the market will not bear the initial costs.

Mrs Bunnell—That is the end result.

Councillor Robbins—That is not true.

Mr JENKINS—We are trying to get an idea of what these equations are. We have talked a lot about cost, but we have not talked about benefits. The benefits might not be up front; the benefits might be longer term. I think we understand that there has to be an education process about that. Even if we put a bean counter hat on, there are a lot of arguments we can make that it is not as big a cost as people think it is.

Councillor Robbins—That is exactly right.

Mrs Bunnell—I was just following on from Mark's comment about retrofitting, and I agree. We have very old suburbs in Townsville that we are trying to retrofit. It is expensive, so this is a wonderful opportunity to do a green space area properly.

Mr JENKINS—The interesting thing is that, in a way, we have been retrofitting for a while. In the Whitlam years, the federal government decided they would involve themselves in putting in sewerage in what were then outer suburbs of major cities. Thirty years on, it begs the question about whether this is a federal role. I am quite happy that they went out and did it because we would still be playing catch up, even in a city like Melbourne. I think a lot of these things where we are looking for a role for the federal government are of that nature. Some of that is an element of retrofit. It is retrofitting to put in sewers rather than having a pit out the back and things like that. It is also easier to put in bus lanes in newer suburbs. When we get down to who actually should bear the cost, I suppose we are saying that it is a shared community responsibility and we are now trying to define what the community is. Does it include local, state and federal governments? Does it include people as rate payers? Does it include developers that might benefit down the track?

Mr Hoffman—I would say that it is a shared responsibility. One of the issues that local government faces in its relationship with the state government is responding to things such as the Integrated Planning Act and the Environmental Protection Act. Those pieces of legislation sought to improve the standards and the processes and to get better outcomes in terms of what was developed and how. In terms of environmental issues, they sought to progress environmental outcomes and standards. No-one can really say that that is an inappropriate course of action, but the consequences of that legislation and setting those goals and targets flow through to the players in the field. I would say that the same thing applies to the federal government, to the extent that the federal government sees it is necessary to do this, that or the other in relation to environmental issues, developmental issues or whatever it may be. If you want to set the rules, then you play the game in terms of the implications of making those things happen. I suggest that that is an important consideration in whether the Commonwealth is involved, and for that matter whether the states are involved. The regulators, if they choose to set

standards, have got to realise the ability to achieve those has got to be very much a shared responsibility. They cannot simply set the rules and walk away from how you achieve that outcome.

I come back to the point made earlier about responsibilities here. There is an old adage that says: 'The Commonwealth has got the money and keeps it; the state government has got the power and uses it; local government has got the problem and can't do much about it.' I think we need to look at the fiscal imbalance situations too. I know, from a local government perspective, that the Commonwealth's cost-shifting inquiry is looking to address roles and responsibilities and the financial relationships that flow from that. If we are talking about sustainability, let us talk about the sustainability of governmental processes that can achieve outcomes as well. That is where we have the issue of the reality of what rules are set and who resources them to get the outcomes that we see as desirable for the benefit of John and Jane Citizen. It is the totality of the balancing act that is being played here.

CHAIR—It has been put to us before that, in terms of new greenfield areas, this stuff is a no-brainer. The science is there, the economics is there, there is no knowledge gap—and it just does not always happen. In the examples where it does happen, part of our work is to try to find out why it happens in those parts and not in others. We were in Western Sydney, where they were proudly proclaiming a retrofit of a park. It was just wasteland and they had chucked in a swing and some tanbark and said, 'What a great step forward.' We were thinking, 'Why wasn't this here before?' They said, 'We've got this new suburb coming in.' 'Are you making the subdividers do these things?' 'Oh, no. We wouldn't do that. That pushes the cost of the housing up.' I said, 'You are just transferring the cost of that housing to everybody else by not doing it.' I am just wondering to what extent some people are wimping out on things that really are not that complicated in new greenfield areas—they are very complicated in the middle and inner suburbs.

Councillor Robbins—In the Gold Coast we have just struck our infrastructure charges that we are requiring each developer to pay per block under the Integrated Planning Act. We have had three years of consultation with the industry, in roundtable discussions, whilst working up this policy, and yet they are still complaining—now that we are implementing it—that they cannot afford it and that it is going to blow out the cost of land and that the first home buyer is not going to be able to afford to buy that land. That is utter rubbish in many respects, because, if you look at the capital gain of property on the Gold Coast over the last five, six or seven years, you will see that the minor amount we are asking for—$14,000 per block—is really today's cost that has to be borne, otherwise we will have to go back to tomorrow's community and ask them to retrofit it, when it is far more expensive. There is a price, and the price needs to be paid at today's rates and today's standards and the works need to be done. We should not go back there and visit it in future when it is far more expensive and more difficult to do.

CHAIR—So is that part of your approach to overcoming the lag between humans being in a space and then the infrastructure, services and the like that make a community coming in long after people have already arrived?

Councillor Robbins—We are looking at our whole strategic plan and saying, 'This area will support X amount of density, therefore we are looking at a way in which to cost that,' which we have adopted, and then we apply that to each block in a given area. We take it on board in that

way. We have our greenfield sites and our brownfield sites and we look at ways and means of upgrading infrastructure and the costs associated with that.

Mr Ricketts—Even with that infrastructure charging, we are doing the same thing in Brisbane but that looks like a very traditional infrastructure.

Mr Hoffman—It is limited.

Mr Ricketts—It is very limited. It does not deal with any social infrastructure. Public transport is not covered. That is really paying for business as usual up front. Even at that level it is certainly not full cost recovery. It is a minor proportion of that.

CHAIR—So it is capital works stuff?

Councillor Robbins—It is parks as well.

Mr Hoffman—It is local roads, water, waste water, stormwater and parks.

CHAIR—So that is restricted—it is stated in the act.

Mr Hoffman—It is stated in the act.

CHAIR—That is the only scope you have.

Mr Hoffman—And it must be cost recovery. If challenged, you have to be able to demonstrate that these are the costs that you are incurring and you seek to recover them; you are not able to build fat into them simply because you would like to do those other things that the legislation does not let you do, and you would use it if you could, but the system is very tightly controlled. If you want to go further, it is a matter of negotiating with the developers as to what they will contribute. Some do.

CHAIR—Who goes further?

Mr Hoffman—I guess many councils try to go further.

Councillor Robbins—It is often a trade-off. It is carrot and stick.

Mr Ricketts—We are in the process of looking at suitable incentives that we can provide to get more sustainable development but they all involve some sort of trade-off or public good, whether it is density or—

CHAIR—The lot yield or something like that?

Councillor Robbins—That is what they are looking at.

Mr Ricketts—Yes. So you have to give them something in order to get something back. Maybe it is an arbitrary gross floor area or something more significant in terms of public good.

But I get very uneasy about that because we are really giving with the one hand and taking away with the other hand in terms of a public good. It is a very arbitrary decision as to whether energy efficiency is more important than social infrastructure.

CHAIR—When you lie awake at night thinking about these issues—

Councillor Robbins—As you do.

CHAIR—and a little birdie says, 'Touch the Commonwealth for cash,' which is an obvious first start—we have heard about it all around the country—does that little bird talk to you about other things that the Commonwealth could do other than possibly bankroll early provision or bridge the gap between what is thought to be economically viable and what is optimal in sustainability?

Mrs Bunnell—No, things are done on an incentive basis. I see a role for the Commonwealth and the state in that.

CHAIR—Talk it out a bit.

Mrs Bunnell—There is no role—is that what you are saying, Chair?

CHAIR—No, I am just teasing you out to get you thinking about what you are talking about.

Councillor Robbins—Formulating ESD principles and building guidelines for ESD principles at a national level. I know that Victoria has its ESD principals and its star rating. I truly believe that tomorrow's consumer will look at what sort of rating a house has and will ask: 'How much will it cost me to run it? Is it correctly orientated? Does it have insulation?' They will be asking those sorts of things and perhaps building them into the national building guidelines—some sort of rating. It will educate the community as to what they are buying. People do it with their whitegoods so why won't they do it with their houses? They will do it, and they are starting to do it. They are asking, 'Will this house cost me a lot to run in the future?'

CHAIR—In terms of incentives, Ann, are you saying that, if a subdivider came to you with a no-name brand, minimalist, 'We're doing this because we've got to do it' proposal, and someone came to you with an integrated stormwater-waste water reticulation system and argued that there was a 10 per cent price penalty on doing that, then maybe the feds could play a role in easing the pain?

Mrs Bunnell—It is very interesting that you ask me that. We just happen to have put out expressions of interest for a carbon neutral water recycling project, and we have received more than 40 responses. This is for the private sector to do work in our waste water area, and we have had 40 expressions of interest—so we are doing those things. I would have liked an opportunity to show how proactive we have been, and I am sure other councils would have too.

CHAIR—You have the floor; go for it.

Mrs Bunnell—That is one project we are very excited about.

CHAIR—How does it work? What have you asked them to do?

Mrs Bunnell—I will ask Greg to talk about that.

Mr Bruce—Ann has already referred to the fact that we have got the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area backing right on to our urban environment—there is no distinction. This is where this project comes from. We are subject to the costs of upgrading sewerage infrastructure. In doing that, the engineers have been building on some of the great work we did with the Commonwealth for urban stormwater quality management. That was a $2 million project that we did; it was an innovative project. In doing that, the engineers saw that there was going to be a high cost to the sewerage, so they looked around for best practice. Instead of putting clean water out into the World Heritage area, they wanted to further upgrade and put clean water back to industry and irrigation and get 95 per cent to 98 per cent dry water reuse.

CHAIR—Discharge to the land rather than the sea?

Mr Bruce—Yes. The energy costs for the process of doing that are very high. The reverse osmosis and sand filtration costs are very high. Because we have the World Heritage area, we wondered how we could get funding. We are basically putting together a project through the Australian Greenhouse Office looking at carbon credits and all the different options for using renewable energy. What started off as a project looking for extra financials and ways of getting funding—being creative—and involved two projects has now shifted to one project. The council decided to put it out as one project and sought expressions of interest. That is an extraordinary thing that has happened. It is a massive cultural shift in integration between environmental people, engineers and councillors.

Mrs Bunnell—It is cross-discipline, which is very important.

Mr Bruce—It is going to be dependent on private-public partnerships, and obviously the Commonwealth has difficulties in providing funding to private-public partnerships. It has done it in some areas in the past. At the same time, we are trying to find areas in which the Commonwealth can provide funding, but there are institutional framework funding limitations to that.

CHAIR—You are saying that, beyond the major establishment infrastructure challenges, some of these retrofit particular, in this case, ecologically significant outcomes—

Mrs Bunnell—And economically significant.

Mr Bruce—To be carbon neutral, it has to compete with cheap coal-powered stations and that sort of thing. To do that there is obviously a cost to the community or a shared cost for the whole of Australia to participate to ensure that instead of putting clean water out onto the reef, we actually use it in a sustainable way back into business and industry, and then also reduce our power consumption for pumping water from other catchments, like in the Burdekin.

CHAIR—The feds might say to local government, 'There is your financial assistance grants money; there are no great strings attached.' By the way, we are being told that there should be, in terms of broad parameters—it is not unreasonable to say, even for the roads money, that there is

an integrated transport strategy that includes active transport options. We are not going to tell you what that looks like, but at least have that considered as part of the ongoing process and then there may be some add-on incentives for demonstration projects to actually nail the technologies, prove the business case or actually show that it can be done. What other kinds of levers or incentives do you imagine we might be able to use?

Mr Wight—One of the major ones is the use of the taxation system. Various taxation systems have quite a lot of unintended consequences. An example might be the fringe benefits tax formula that encourages people to drive large cars long distances. That has implications for the transport systems, people's behavioural choice in transport and people's behavioural choice in choosing locations to live and work—all having a negative effect on sustainability. Another example is the incentives to import wasteful vehicles. A four-wheel drive vehicle attracts a lesser taxation penalty than a smaller, fuel-efficient vehicle. While there may be a good reason somewhere along the line to have those sorts of things, the unintended consequences of them can be quite counterproductive.

CHAIR—You are suggesting that, through taxation signals or whatever, we make more stark the difference between helpful, virtuous choices and those that are less so—

Mr Wight—Yes.

Mrs Bunnell—Yes.

CHAIR—because it is all muddied up and the average consumer might not know whether or not they are doing the right thing and might not have a signal that makes them think, 'Hey, I might need to think about this a bit because it will cost me more to register my car.'

Mr Wight—Yes. Steps like rebates on renewable energy and so on are steps in the right direction, but it might be worth having some sort of sustainability criteria that applies to any decision about whether a tax system is designed one way or another way, and asks, 'Will the imposition of this lead us to more sustainable or less sustainable behaviours?' Another unintended consequence occurs in the situation where the principal place of residence is virtually the only refuge from capital gains. An outcome of that is that people tend to invest far more in their principal place of residence than they require for shelter, which has enormous implications for the resource take-up for housing, the land take-up for housing and the affordability. Maybe there are opportunities for other avenues of capital gains refuge that would encourage people to invest their money not only in their own homes but in other enterprises that add to sustainability.

Mr Ricketts—I deal with waste as well as sustainability. In terms of Commonwealth policy outcomes, we are faced with things like the packaging covenant, which has a very weak framework and poor deliverables, and we have to deal with that through our recycling schemes. There is a massive subsidy to virgin materials. We provide the subsidy to recycling. At the end of the day it comes back to the person in the street. They are paying at one level or another. But we cannot affect products, even on a state-wide basis. It is very difficult to handle those sorts of regimes. They have to be on a national basis.

We are fortunate in being an island in that we have very strong control over what comes in and what does not. With regard to the federal policies on these sorts of things, as Wally said, we

should look through a sustainability set of eyes at the outcome of these subsidies to virgin materials and the effect of a lack of extended producer-responsibility provisions. If you have to pay for retrieval and disposal of your washing machine when you buy it, that is a price signal as to how it is constructed, what materials it is constructed of and what regime has been set up with the various collectors to get it, and that comes back to you as a purchaser. We do not need expensive education programs—we have one sitting on the price tag.

CHAIR—Your sense is that that is either underutilised or that it distorts better practice purely because—

Mr Ricketts—Yes. A number of things that the Commonwealth does are very good in that regard, but a ubiquitous approach does not exist.

CHAIR—What about your transport infrastructure? Everybody in Perth talks about you guys as having got your act somewhere near together. They are quite positive comments, actually, which is—

Mr Hoffman—Tell us more!

Mr Ricketts—Obviously you did not vote last Saturday!

CHAIR—No, I am a tourist. Everyone south of Townsville is a southerner, I was once told. I am a southerner. You have gone to an effort with trying to make the public transport experience more satisfying; that is, buses move and there is frequency rather than a nailed time that they arrive—there are spreads. The other thing we have heard is that, for people who want to ride bikes, you do not look at them like they are carrying the Ebola virus onto the bus when they bring their bikes with them, and there are racks that you stick on the front and those kinds of things. What was the consciousness that drove that? Was it a congestion issue principally? Did you think, 'Let's at least provide some options so, if the city is gridlocked at peak hour, we can say "You've got other options, guys"'? What was the thinking behind that and what price signals, incentives and education things did you put in place?

Mr Ricketts—I have to be careful here because we have two political directions in my council at the moment with fairly diverse views on this matter.

CHAIR—The yin and yang of local government!

Mr Ricketts—I will put it in a bit of historical perspective. I was around when the first Busways decisions were made. It was primarily a congestion and air quality issue. The modelling at the time showed that the best way that we saw to move that forward was to start off with Busways, because you did not have any intermodal transfers. But then over time, when the densities were sufficient, you could move Busways into light rail or do whatever you wanted. So claiming the space—and this gets back to the retrofit argument I talked about before—was the primary thing we had to do. The interesting thing in hindsight is that, at the last election, the mayor-elect ran a campaign saying, 'Get the buses out of the way of cars,' and was very successful with that. So what that tells me is that, while we might have been successful in setting up some of that infrastructure, we have not been very successful in articulating why that should impact on single-occupancy vehicles.

CHAIR—So the public buy-in has not been there?

Mr Ricketts—No. We have decreasing participation in our public transport in spite of that and therefore decreasing revenue and return, particularly when you upgrade your buses, as we are, to gas and airconditioning.

CHAIR—It is a vicious circle, too—if you start cutting back on services, everyone walks, as it is quicker.

Mr Ricketts—Exactly. I notice that, when you were asking about a commute and said, 'Do I hop on the train?' Sue said, 'No, you have to stand on the train.' Friends of mine on the coast will drive in because now, with an upgraded road system, you have a far better commute than you have on the train. So the infrastructure is not simply the only answer. It gets back to what you started off with ages ago—this community engagement process. One of the big difficulties that I think we face as a society is actually articulating that.

CHAIR—Let us talk about that.

Ms GEORGE—Do you have any figures on the number of people who are commuting for employment purposes into Brisbane from the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast on a daily basis? What are we looking at—how many people are travelling in?

Councillor Robbins—We have them. We can provide them.

Mr Ricketts—I used to be part of it, so I know what they look like!

Ms GEORGE—It seems to be exactly the same problem as in my area. The reason people do not use public transport is that it takes two hours to get from Wollongong to Sydney, whereas, if they drive, they might get there in an hour and a half. While employment is located away from where people live, I think we can have all of these good-sounding principles in place but it does not really deal with people's reality.

Mr Wight—That is one of the things this regional planning process is attempting to address. It will be in everyone's interest—from a transport point of view, a community cohesion point of view and a service delivery point of view—if we can have a better distribution of employment in the region so that we have a complex set of economies that contribute to a regional economy rather than an entire area that is treated as a dormitory for a centralised economy.

Ms GEORGE—That is happening on the Gold Coast—

CHAIR—A sprawl is worse if it is mono-sprawl—

Mr Wight—That is right, and there has been a lot of difficulty in getting the focus of employment generation into some of the other parts of the region.

CHAIR—How is the regional strategy going to change that, though? It takes a bit of macho to hold back from the quick residential subdivision gain in the face of a long-term economic strategy.

Mr Wight—What it will do is align state government decisions on the location of institutions. For instance, if a major educational institution or hospital is planned by the local authority—they say, 'Here is a site for a school or medical facility'—what happens at the moment is that the state agency say, 'We do not want to put it in until you have 10,000 people living here, because it will not be utilised.' When the area gets 10,000 people, they say—

CHAIR—'Let's make it 11,000'!

Mr Wight—'This land is too valuable, so we will flog it off. For the price we can get for this piece of land that is in the right place we can go three kilometres further out and buy a piece of land that is in the wrong place and build the facility, so for the price we get for the original piece of land we not only buy the land but build the facility.' But it ends up that the facility is in the wrong place. If the regional framework has a stronger influence on the locational decisions of state agencies and the like—

Mr Hoffman—Had primary control over what is happening—

Mr Wight—Having the Treasurer as the chair of the Regional Coordination Committee might help in that. If the capital works have to be sieved through the regional framework that will help to get the synergies between combinations of uses in localities that will then attract and support other employment generation activities in particular locations, at all levels—district, subregional and regional.

CHAIR—Greg, you wanted to add something.

Mr Hoffman—There has been very significant public pressure driving the process that we are now entering into, as Wally has just described. The government plan by October this year to have put in place that regional plan. There is a strong expectation that they will bite the bullet on these issues, including how you ensure that the planning process integrates appropriately across local and state government responsibilities and then, having done that and established the plan for that purpose, ensure that it will in fact eventuate. There are two elements to that. One is the regulatory framework to ensure that the agencies that are responsible—local and state—are obliged to comply with that broad framework. The big question that hangs off that concerns the resource implications, particularly in terms of the services—transport and other significant public infrastructure. That is another challenge for the state government to address.

But I suggest that where the Commonwealth can play a very useful part in this is if they can satisfy themselves that that planning process is robust and is about trying to achieve the most appropriate outcomes with respect to the sustainability agenda across its broadest definition. That is justification, in my view, for the Commonwealth to ask, 'Where can we help in the achievement of that?' That would be a very appropriate point to buy into the debate, as opposed to saying, 'I think we will pick this winner or that winner.'

CHAIR—It was put to us in another hearing that, as with competition, which everyone wants, so long as it is not affecting them—and to achieve some of the reforms that have driven growth in the Australian economy we had the National Competition Council and a policy framework to support it—we need a national sustainability commission. It was put to us that tens to hundreds of millions of dollars of reward payments for states and territories that get serious about it might

be a way of moving this forward. One of the reasons we are having this inquiry is that people say the feds are not that involved. I have to tell you that we are very involved when it all goes bad; because of the social tensions, the poor health outcomes, the unemployment benefits and all of that when people are stuck out in the middle of 'Yetiville', miles away from a job, we are very involved. These are some of the conversations that we have been having around this.

Mrs Bunnell—I would like to make a comment on public transport that you may be interested in. We survey our community regularly. The biggest issue, from our surveys, is always the need for public transport. We supply small transport for community groups and things like that, but the reason Brisbane is so advanced in this area is that it receives a huge subsidy from the state government that none of us receive. Again, we all have similar problems, so this is—

CHAIR—This is quite refreshing for us. Where we come from, we get criticised because Queensland gets all the tax revenue from our state. So it is nice to see that there is intrastate tension as well!

Mrs Bunnell—There is no tension; I just admire the way they do it.

CHAIR—That's the spirit!

Mrs Bunnell—I am trying to find out about it. It is part of the decentralisation issue that you need to look at when you look at Queensland. It is a huge issue to our community, and they recognise it as a big issue.

CHAIR—How do you deal with that?

Mrs Bunnell—Very badly. The department of transport has brought in a commercial operator from London who has been on a very fast learning curve about public transport in a provincial city in Australia, in the tropics.

CHAIR—Tough call.

Mr Hoffman—'Oh, you need airconditioning, do you?'!

Mrs Bunnell—And we have vast distances, huge distances. Anyway, they have had a lot of teething problems. After about four or five years of this we are back to a situation where the public will not use it because it has all these problems. It is a chicken-and-egg issue, but it is a huge issue to our community.

CHAIR—Using that same example, we have had evidence put to us that, 'If only the feds could pay for another two kilometres of tram track, our residents would have 11 active transport options to use.' Hang on a minute! Out where Harry and I are, there is not a lot of public transport at all. So we say to them that they are luxuriating in options that so much of the country does not have. There is inequity around this.

Mrs Bunnell—It is part of the idolatry of the car. We really have enshrined it in our lifestyle. That is a philosophical discussion for another day, but we have entrenched that in our very poor public transport systems.

Mr Wight—It is not just a philosophical argument: 35 per cent of the population are too young, too old, too infirm or too poor to have adequate access to a car. On the Sunshine Coast, there is a 0.8 per cent mode share for public transport, which effectively means that 34.2 per cent of the population is transport disadvantaged.

CHAIR—But that leaves open the active transport option. It has been put to us that we have Roads to Recovery, so why not leverage that and have a segment of it quarantined for active transport? That could put in the bike paths and give people alternatives so that if they cannot get from destination A to destination B they can at least get from destination A to where the bus stop is. Some arguments around that have been put to us as well.

Mr Wight—There are certainly a number of initiatives and levers and so on that need to be taken in that way, but in the fullness of time the increasing dependence on the car—and it is still increasing—will leave more and more people disadvantaged. We need to have ways of turning around our investment decisions that really do offer choice to those who do not have choice. Whether people have 10 or 11 choices is of academic interest to most of us here; in most cases, we have the choice of walking, taking a car or not moving.

Councillor Robbins—But doesn't that go back to building better urban regions? That is the crux of what everybody is saying here. We need urban regions that are self-sustaining. We need regions where people can live, work and recreate without relying on a motor vehicle. I believe that is what we have embraced on the Gold Coast. At Varsity Lakes we have a whole economic hub in that region—education facilities, varying densities where people can live, open space, and cafe society as well.

CHAIR—You could characterise it as almost reinventing the village.

Councillor Robbins—That is exactly right. People live in their apartment, go downstairs, have breakfast at the cafe and walk across the road—the children go to school down the road and the parents are in an office block just opposite the school. That is the sort of integration that we are looking at, so that people do not have to get in their car on a daily basis and drive 35 or 50 kilometres—or spend three-quarters of an hour in gridlock—to get to their workplace.

Mr Hoffman—That was greenfield, though, so it was not—

Councillor Robbins—It is a greenfield site—that is exactly right—but we are doing it in brownfield areas as well. We get a hammering nationally in relation to our high-rise, but in fact we are making them comply with ESD principles. We are making them build stormwater retention tanks in their bases so they can use that stormwater in their landscaping and gardens. We are putting home office components in the third and fourth levels, and then we have got the commercial component at the base. There are integrated uses. They have resort and residential portions. So you have got all of these land uses, if you like, in this one building, and by densifying that area we have got a village tower. By urbanising that one area and densifying that one building we are saving our 'green behind the gold'. We are protecting that area because we are containing urban sprawl. That is really important too. People are buying these home offices, they are going in the elevator down to their workplace and they are dining on the street at night—and they like it. It is selling very quickly.

CHAIR—How do you get, say, QBE to move out of downtown Brizzie and set up in Varsity Lakes? The gravitational pull of some of the commercial centres is—

Councillor Robbins—We have developed our own economic development department because we felt that there was this need.

CHAIR—You guys are probably a bad example, because you are having a red-hot go at this stuff, but, thinking nationally, how does one persuade 700-odd local councils to get serious about economic development that moves forward in parallel with residential activity that might be going on in the area? It is much easier said than done.

Councillor Robbins—Once again, doesn't it go back to sustainability and a building code—a whole sustainable code that could be developed and applied at a national level? There are rewards. We find that, to get people to come on board with ESD principles in their greenfield urban development, we have to sort of provide them with a reward. Maybe it is density but, as you said, Mark, you have got to be careful that you do not use that as purchasing power, if you like. They have got to have these benchmarks whereby they achieve and they get to that level, and then we push them—sometimes gently, sometimes with a great deal of effort—to deliver a better standard each and every time. I think that that can come through a star rating, if you like—again pushing the industry.

CHAIR—But do consumers want that? I was on Queensland radio on Friday—

Councillor Robbins—It is an education program as well.

CHAIR—There are McMansions branching out of Brizzie which are designed to have that Tuscan look with no eaves. The hot sun belts in the windows and it costs a fortune to keep them comfortable.

Councillor Robbins—We have been down that path. It is great in Tuscany; just leave it there!

CHAIR—Can the feds work more effectively in trying to get—

Councillor Robbins—Yes, with building codes.

CHAIR—consumer awareness and the metrics to actually measure what is going on around Australia?

Mr Ricketts—The Building Code of Australia does not address sustainability.

Councillor Robbins—That is right; it does not.

Mr Ricketts—That is a key thing that has to change.

CHAIR—They told us last week that they did a little bit of it, but it moves at a glacial pace.

Councillor Robbins—Yes, it does, but the problem for us is that, when we then tried to introduce a much higher level of that—we have developed our own code at SEQ level—we

could not apply it because the BCA overrides it. So we had the housing industry saying, 'Not interested; go away—we will take you on legally.'

CHAIR—They were not that enthusiastic with us.

Ms Currie—That is where we need the feds to be standing up at a policy level. It is the Building Code of Australia, it is the sustainability codes, it is those basic decisions, and then it is the educational argument and the stimulation of the debate. Whether it is council to council or region to region, we face the argument, 'But I can do it there without that,' and that is happening from state to state. We need the federal government to be promoting these discussions about land use planning that is sustainable, about building design that is sustainable. We need a process that helps us, because to some degree at the moment the process hinders us.

Ms GEORGE—Just to take this a bit further, I want to quote a paragraph from the Brisbane Institute's submission to get your response. We have been talking a lot about the national government vacating the field, but the Brisbane Institute seem to point the finger a bit at the state government. They say:

> In Queensland, developers have more power, due to the compensation law, than in some other jurisdictions. Local government impositions that reduce the profitability of a development can be challenged successfully, and compensation sought where local government imposes controls. State legislation does not permit many carrots or sticks to be deployed in the interests of good planning.

We are talking about the new greenfield urban development projects that might come on line and trying to use a bit of leverage with the developers, but to what extent are state laws—not just in this state but in other states—a constraint on good practice and good outcomes?

Mr Hoffman—We were talking there about the injurious affection provisions: that if you diminish the development potential of a site, you can in fact be taken to court and compensation could be paid. I think that is unique to Queensland.

Councillor Robbins—No, it has just changed under the Integrated Planning Act. There is a two-year time frame now. Previously, the approval went with the land indefinitely. Under IPA, there is a two-year time frame now. If we change some of those land use zonings, if you like, when we adopt a new town plan, if it is not developed within two years then they lose it. It is a use it or lose it clause. Thank goodness the state government has finally embraced that, because we had draconian legislation.

Under that law, if there is no substantial land development activity on the site within that two years, they lose it. But if substantial works are undertaken—the term is 'substantial start'—then they get a two-year extension. What we are faced with on the Gold Coast is that, in the good old boom of the seventies and eighties, some pretty wild applications were approved but they have not been realised. Now we have changed our town plan and said, 'That's not appropriate. We're looking at a more sustainable approach now. We don't want a 20-storey condominium block in the hinterland of the Currumbin Valley.' So we have pulled that away from them and they are saying, 'But wait. We want to realise it now.' We are in a time frame of compensating them the development potential loss. We are going to tough it out but some of them will lose.

Ms GEORGE—It just seems to me that there is an inevitable tension between good outcomes, good regulation and good codes of practice and what the developers say the market will or will not sustain. How do we resolve that paradox that we face?

Mrs Bunnell—Educate the developers.

Councillor Robbins—Education is a good key—education for the community and the consumer. They should be more aware. Look at the impact it has had on the whitegoods industry. Whenever you go to buy a fridge or a washing machine, you look at its star rating. Everybody looks at its stars. Really, tomorrow's home has to have a star rating. So the consumer becomes consumer driven as well, and then the developer wants to meet that demand because we have educated the consumer. The other thing is the amount of capital gain that has been made on property. They say, 'We can't afford the $14,000. The poor old first home buyer will always pay that.' What is the cost of not delivering it? That is what you really have to ask yourself too. If you do not deliver sustainability into the Building Code, into greenfield developments and brownfield developments, what is the long-term cost? What is the cost to tomorrow's children?

Ms GEORGE—Provisions for low-cost housing are being made in some new urban developments. I am genuinely concerned about the fall-off rate for first home owners. Our generations capitalised on the capital gain but what will happen to the next generation coming through? What provisions can we make?

Councillor Robbins—There are a few things. You can look at your town plan and ensure that even small blocks have only a percentage site coverage so that they do not overcapitalise. They get a small block and they build on it boundary to boundary and it is still a really expensive house. So there is that aspect of it. The other aspect is that legislation, state or federal, could insist that a percentage be dedicated to affordable housing. I looked at some places in a new development—I will not give you the name of it because you might see it tomorrow—where they said, 'We have an affordable housing component.' If it starts at $350,000, to me it does not seem particularly affordable. How you control that is the ratio of the footprint of the house to the plot. That is what we are looking at. Also, you could insist that on greenfield or brownfield sites a percentage be dedicated. I know that they do that on the west coast of America.

CHAIR—As I understand it, Canberra is the only jurisdiction where the vendor's declaration has to include some statement about the cost of running the place.

Councillor Robbins—There you go.

CHAIR—It is a bit like your car's fuel consumption. If you have a badly designed house it might save you $5,000. You can get a house for $6,500 a square rather than $7,000 but it is going to cost you.

Mr Ricketts—The outcome of that has been very successful. We are looking at doing that. I do not know whether we can. Being a creature of the state, we have had a number of issues. We are trying to bring in affordable housing and other issues that do not fit within the state government legislation. That is an issue that we have with the state, and I will not go into that too much.

CHAIR—What about you guys cranking up the tools you have? We hear about energy security issues and the surge on the power grid when the temperature goes up and everyone turns on their airconditioners. What about you guys saying, 'If you want climate control in your homes, stick some photovoltaic cells on the roof so at least when you are sucking up the main energy you are kicking a bit back into the grid'?

Mr Ricketts—Both Brisbane and Noosa have tried to ban electric storage hot water, for example, the most wasteful thing that sits in a modern home. We have not been able to do that as yet.

CHAIR—Why is that?

Mr Ricketts—State legislation. So we are looking at that now. SEQROC has come up with a sustainable housing code, which is a bit like the star rating approach that Susan was talking about. It is a regulatory approach but it could just as easily be a marketing tool whereby you get a certain number of points for different features and it is done on a menu basis. Depending on where the house is, what the market is and all sorts of other things, the developer can mix and match and, in that particular circumstance, decide, 'I am going to go for safety,' or, 'I'm going to put it all into energy efficiency.' There is a degree of flexibility in how they meet that standard.

CHAIR—Is your rating system going to be linked with that, where you get a sustainability rate discount if you have done those things?

Mr Ricketts—Yes. We are looking at that at the moment. That is a SEQROC initiative across the region. I will leave this document with you: a state government review of cost-effectiveness. It is a very good piece of work that MMA did in reviewing that code. But it is again trying to build some sort of market stimulus into the whole system. I believe that you are meeting with the Australian Green Development Forum this afternoon—

CHAIR—We met with the HIA last week and they said, 'We just build what clients want.'

Mr Ricketts—Indeed. A large number of people are prepared to invest in these more sustainable developments now, and that is a growing trend all through this region. How big that niche is and what it will bear, no-one really knows at this stage. But they are the market leaders at the moment and we see it as necessary that we support them because the laggards need to be shown how to do it. We also need to build it into the marketplace so that everybody can get decent information, rather just how many rooms you get for your dollar, because we have fewer people in bigger houses using more energy.

CHAIR—But what about your role in terms of the building control process? Do we regulate for the third owner? The purchaser and the builder might be happy to build whatever it is they are building. Having a 37 degree driveway might suit the guy because he has a four wheel drive, but the next joker who comes along will have a problem. To what extent does the building code drive the interests of the third and the fourth owner?

Councillor Robbins—It does not at all.

Mr Ricketts—Only in terms of the built form. If it is insulated and so on: just the sensible things like that. A large proportion of sustainability is how you actually live, but we are not addressing that. That is an educative role, as I see it.

Mr Hoffman—You do not know what you do not know.

CHAIR—That is the thing, too: what information is out there?

Mrs Bunnell—We talk about how we educate our community.

CHAIR—We want to talk about Local Agenda 21 , too.

Mrs Bunnell—We are working with local developers on sustainable urban development. That is being trialled in one of the areas. With the education of the community, we work with school groups talking about sustainability. We take them to different areas. We are about to trial the only vertical access wind turbine. It is on the seas coming here. It will be the first in Australia. We are going to put that on our strand. We are using it as an educative tool. These may seem trivial to you but they are very important, because if you can bring your community on they will look at the environmentally satisfactory house and car and things like that. I think that is a role for us; a big role.

CHAIR—Have you seen some change there or is it still only the hydroponic bok choy crowd who buy this stuff?

Mrs Bunnell—Sorry?

CHAIR—Is it still only the hydroponic buck choy eaters who buy sustainable housing?

Mrs Bunnell—No, it is changing.

CHAIR—Is it becoming more of a mainstream aspiration for people?

Mrs Bunnell—I made a throwaway joke about educating the developers and I think that is an area that we really need to work on. Our community is leading the developers. Perhaps that is something peculiar to us.

CHAIR—Are we letting them off too easily?

Mrs Bunnell—We do not have the powers. You are looking at local government as if we had all these powers. We have very limited power. The example that you gave about compensation if you take away development rights has been enshrined in Queensland for a century. It is the only state that had that. There is a slow move away from that. But there is that attitude. Those developers—and we have seen a change in some of them—see that there is a market for this. Perhaps that is a role for the federal government: to do something in this national sustainability committee in terms of showing people the alternatives and giving them options. It is not just the furniture and the colour of your house that are important. Those things are all very important. That is something on a national level that you could achieve. The Building Code of Australia has been a nightmare for us.

Councillor Robbins—It does not have enough teeth.

CHAIR—In terms of the feds helping with that educative role, are you suggesting something like promotion, national recognition and awards celebrating good practice and saying, 'Why isn't this happening?'

Councillor Robbins—Exactly.

Mr Wight—And in fact demonstrating good practice at all levels of government. Local governments have been reasonably proactive of recent times in their own activities in trying to demonstrate better practices. There is certainly tremendous scope for it. But the state governments and Commonwealth governments should also demonstrate their own building developments and ensure that their own buildings are green buildings and ensure that their workplace transport plans are sustainable workplace transport plans and so on. There is a tremendous opportunity to lead by example.

Ms Currie—The Better Cities Program, to just hark back to an example of a related program, was a classic. It gave the opportunity for not only individual projects at local government levels but demonstration projects. It raised the understanding and level of debate phenomenally. I would like to see you consider that again but on this broader scale: a national cities program.

CHAIR—With a greater emphasis on sustainability?

Councillor Robbins—That would be great.

Mr Ricketts—A point that Wally has just made is one that we have been pursuing in Brisbane—that is, trying to do it ourselves. There is huge value, and not just as an exemplar for the community, in doing it yourself, because at the end of the day they will say, 'You're government—you don't have to make a profit,' or whatever. A lot of this stuff is not all that easy. There is some simple stuff, but the proper integration of these agendas is quite a difficult challenge. What we have found in Brisbane City Council is that there is an enormous learning curve to go through personally as decision makers while we try to do it to our own activities, whether that is energy efficiency or social equity or whatever it might be, and try to integrate those so that we can go to the business community or the wider community and say, 'Why don't you think about these things in your daily life—why don't you choose something other than a Tuscan monstrosity?' If we have been through the same sorts of processes ourselves and thought it through, it gives us at least some robustness and standing with them because we have tried these same challenges.

So I think that is a very important point that Wally made. The federal government itself should actually look at its own operations wherever possible. You carry enormous stocks of land within Brisbane, I know, and they are usually flogged off for the highest price to pay for a social good somewhere. I am not arguing against that, because money is obviously an important thing. But it is not put through a sustainability filter. Here is Brisbane spending $80-odd million to buy back green space and the federal government is flogging it off to pay for a school in Western Australia or whatever it might be, or some other good thing.

CHAIR—Or for Townsville.

Mr Ricketts—To give us a subsidy—exactly. So there are those sorts of filters. It is not easy and it is only in the doing that you can actually learn about some of these things.

Councillor Robbins—As chair of southern planning and the Urban Design Advisory Committee on the Gold Coast, I believe we have taken a fair bit of clubbing, if you like, from the development industry. I had a run at them pretty solidly about two years ago in relation to the Tuscan design. They were really up in arms on it, but the thing about it was that they were cutting costs by not putting eaves on buildings. They did not have to have as big an expanse in their trusses and that sort of thing, so they were cutting their costs to the bone and telling everybody it was fashionable. I started exposing it, saying that it was hard to cool, there were all of these different aspects to living and owning one of these. I was telling people to look at the long-term costs of running and owning them. They have gone out of fashion—they have gone off the boil on the Gold Coast in a big way. I do not know if Townsville is experiencing it, but—

Mrs Bunnell—No, we have not.

Ms GEORGE—They are big time in Wollongong!

Councillor Robbins—They have gone totally off the boil, which is wonderful, but some of us had to stand up and really take a hard stand on them. I think it comes down to the community being educated purchasers—look at the buy Australian program, the litter program and the sunscreen program. If you educate the community and they are educated purchasers, I think that will have a huge impact on the industry. It is one way of, if you like, sticking your finger up their noses and pulling them over the line.

Mr Hoffman—In terms of Commonwealth responsibilities, Mark has mentioned Commonwealth land and how it handles its own land. A classic example of the Commonwealth exempting itself from planning and land use matters is very evident here in Brisbane. As you drive in and out of the Brisbane Airport, you see incredible development taking place at the site before you get to the roundabout which is outside the site. In fact, there is a proposal at the moment to build a huge shopping centre adjacent to the entry to the airport.

CHAIR—Which bit is that—is it just when you get past the train—

Mr Hoffman—Yes, the flyover—

CHAIR—So it is between that and the next—

Mr Hoffman—It is just to the right. As you go onto the roundabout and into the airport, it is back on the right-hand side. The issue is that that land is effectively excluded from Brisbane City Council's town planning scheme. Whatever Brisbane Airport Corporation does is by its agreement with Brisbane City and it will choose what it wants to do. That has caused significant issues.

Mrs Bunnell—We have the same issue in Townsville—exactly the same.

Mr Wight—And the fact is that it is all going to be about 2½ kilometres from an existing regional shopping centre.

CHAIR—I took a wrong turn on the way here, before that regional shopping centre!

Mr Hoffman—So there are issues there that are relevant to how the Commonwealth approaches its business too—its willingness or not to comply through its agencies with planning schemes that are already in place. Can I just comment on your suggestion about a national sustainability commission and the parallels you draw between that and the National Competition Commission. Could I say that, without knowing precisely what you might have in mind, I think that idea has merit and is worth pursuing for two reasons. What the NCP was about was to say that where reform was needed because of the significance of that industry or that activity things needed to happen there at a certain level, but below that where it was not so relevant a lower standard of reform or response was appropriate. In respect of your comment before about 700-plus local governments, if you are looking to deal with the problems and the issues where they exist, you are not really wanting to deal with 700, you are going to deal with a fewer number. Maybe your approach not only from a local government perspective but in terms of state government by-in and other stakeholders and developers as well might suggest through a process such as this that you can identify—

CHAIR—You focus your efforts.

Mr Hoffman—You focus your energy, your efforts and your resources where problems exist that need to be addressed. One of the advantages of the national competition policy and the NCC approach was that resources were provided and where initiatives were taken to achieve outcomes they were supported. My earlier comment that if, in this state at this point in time, we do successfully transition to a better regional planning process, the issues around how you make that happen are then the big bits to bite in terms of the resources and the demands to achieve those outcomes. If the Commonwealth is able to say that that is an outcome that is going to achieve all of the better things that we would want in terms of sustainable communities, then perhaps we can see our way clear to support that in some way. Maybe your national sustainability commission is a forum or a process by which you could approach that.

CHAIR—On the consumer behaviour issue, we hear that a great number, four-fifths, of all people espouse sustainability values in their lives, yet only eight per cent do something about it at the till. Is that one of the big challenges we face here—that is, translating a concept into a lot of people's heads that is difficult to nail down into something that has meaning, has value and talks to regular folks? Is that something that the Commonwealth can help to do? For example, Brisbane City Council's bus thing. How do you describe, measure and then sell the benefits of a policy like the bus lane?

Mr Ricketts—Inadequately.

Mr Hoffman—Very poor timing.

CHAIR—Apparently so. In that light, given that suboptimal outcome, is there more opportunity for the feds to do some of the research and the descriptive work to engage people and their imaginations and provide public interest and support for these kinds of ideas? Otherwise, is it a bunch of experts telling people what is good for them and they are saying, 'Hang on, what does it actually mean for my life?' Is there a gap there that we need to fill?

Mr Ricketts—I do not think it is that easy in terms of whether the federal government should be or should not be. In terms of product choice, I know Canada had a go at Green Start and Canberra did a while ago—it is a very difficult area. Philosophically, I would say yes, but I recognise that it is extremely hard to come up with some simplistic rating that is going to reflect product A versus product B. Internalising external issues is still the best way, I think, and then you can have education programs that raise awareness. I went to Enviro 2004 in Sydney last week and a woman from the Gould League in Victoria talked about running waste-wise programs in schools. They are finding that they are getting lower absentee rates at those schools. Why? Maybe they feel more a part of the community or maybe there is some sort of social interaction that comes out of dealing with the waste stream or whatever. She did not know. Some of these things have a sense of community at their essence. Part of it involves me as an individual but, whether it is the high-rise village that Sue was talking about or some other thing, part of it also involves that sense of community. There is a role for all of us in government to try and build that.

Once you have a sense of shared outcomes, the whole sustainability debate is so much easier to deal with. When you are an individual in your Tuscan villa with your four-wheel-drive, it is much more difficult to translate it into 'How is it going to benefit me?' because, usually, selfish behaviour will benefit you in that circumstance. So I think it is about building a sense of community as much as about product choice. If you can build in the externalities and get rid of the subsidies for things then you have a much better marketplace educative element.

Mr JENKINS—One of the things that perhaps we have not touched upon, but which has been raised with us along the way, is that, if you take it that we need a national population policy to drive everything, some people would then say that we need a population distribution policy. In the past Queensland has undoubtedly been the most decentralised state. Its provincial cities are larger in comparison to its capital city than in the other states. In Victoria, we spoke to local government representatives from the Latrobe Valley and Wodonga, and they were challenging whether we should see the growth of Melbourne as inevitable. You folk from south-east Queensland are quite rightly planning for business as usual and the fact that you are seeing growth, with one in seven Australians living in this corner of the world.

Also, Ann has been saying that, in a state that has been renowned for decentralisation, there are still issues around urban centres like Townsville and a host of other centres up the coast. I am wondering whether there is a fear here in Brisbane and in the macrosurrounds that the footprint is getting too big—not only in an ecological sense but to the extent that social problems and things like that become even more difficult, or insurmountable—whereas we have the potential in Townsville, or wherever, to build urban centres of a size that is much more manageable and more sustainable. I appreciate that you are practitioners on the ground—at the coalface—and that you have to worry about the challenge that is in your face.

Mr Wight—We have a couple of different examples in south-east Queensland of that sort of thing. On the one hand, Noosa Shire, at the northern end of my patch, on the Sunshine Coast, have determined that there is a limit to the amount of infrastructure that can be provided without affecting the characteristics that make Noosa attractive. By limiting the amount of infrastructure that they are prepared to provide, in effect they limit the capacity for population growth in that area. By contrast, Ipswich City has identified areas for enormous population growth over a long time.

In Noosa, when they first brought the policy in, there was a bit of an acceleration of development because people wanted to get in before the door was slammed in their face. What has occurred is that the scarcity of development capacity has led to price waves, which means that the people who are servicing the highly attractive parts of the local authority can no longer live in those highly attractive areas. They are now living in either the neighbouring local authority or in the rural hinterland behind the area, and suddenly Noosa has a commuting problem that is driven by the variation in affordability, whereas Ipswich, because it is further from the coast and does not have the same peak of attraction—

CHAIR—Ambience.

Mr Wight—is much more affordable. You can get a higher standard of accommodation in Ipswich, and that is partly a capacity-driven thing. I understand that in recent times the growth rate in Noosa has diminished somewhat, probably because the gate is sort of half closed now. At the same time, the growth rate in Ipswich is increasing, and that is partly because of the affordability issue—that people who would traditionally choose to live on the coast are now looking at other trade-offs that they can make.

Councillor Robbins—But it does not mean that Noosa is a less desirable place to live—

Mr Wight—Not at all.

Councillor Robbins—than Ipswich is. It means that Noosa has become an elite area which many people can no longer afford, so they go to an affordable area such as Ipswich. That is the reality. We deal with that coastal development versus urban development in our region all the time.

Mr Wight—And it does give rise to some multiple-disadvantaged communities. For instance, in the backblocks of Noosa the people engaged in the service trades—food and beverage and so on—are now located in areas where they do not have adequate access to health and education facilities and all sorts of other kinds of normal support facilities that they would expect in their community.

Councillor Robbins—Just going back to Harry's question in relation to regional areas versus consolidated, sprawling, linked areas, we identified a few years ago that we had a greenfield space to accommodate the growth for the next 30 years. We have now found that, with the growth and the numbers that have come to us, really that has been halved, and we only have greenfield space for the next 15 years—and that is with protecting our hinterland and major areas of biodiversity and not encroaching on and undermining our lifestyle. That raises the issue of how we deal with this population now. Regional areas are fine, but you do need a critical mass. I remember the Gold Coast 30 years ago. Restaurants in Coolangatta used to close for winter because there just were not any customers around. You opened in summer and traded then. That is the way you did business. But it was a small country town. In this day and age, it is not like that; you can do business all year around, which is fortunate.

Ms GEORGE—And they complain when the curfew ends at 3 a.m.

Councillor Robbins—Yes, but that is another matter. Let us leave that alone. Others have varying opinions on that. The situation is that you need a critical mass to be self-sustainable. You have to identify what that critical mass is—I think it is something like 450,000 people before a city has its economic foundations and base and is self-sustainable and self-generating. But, not only that, at that point you need to be able to provide it with appropriate levels of infrastructure so that people can move around that region. You also need careful, well-balanced planning of sustainable urban regions—the integrated land uses we were talking about.

Mrs Bunnell—To give Harry an example from our region, Bernard Salt described Townsville as one of the top 10 growth areas in Australia. There is a feeling that Townsville is in hiatus, and that is not so; there is huge growth and it is good growth. One of the things we have not talked about today—which is a shame—is that we have a very good economic base in Townsville with a 34 per cent public sector work force, which is the largest outside Canberra. We have been able to build and use that as an opportunity for good development, for good outcomes for our community.

As I said earlier, we participate in private-public projects. We have a good economic base. We see that very low unemployment is the way to have a sustainable future because you are not under the pressures there are in some of the other high-growth areas where they have no other industry. I know that Cairns is a high-growth area but it is based on tourism. So when you are talking about sustainable cities in the future, you have to ensure that there is a good economic base, because otherwise you have a disadvantaged community that cannot function equitably. I think those things must be said in this context. I do not know if that is what you were heading for, Harry.

Mr JENKINS—That is good.

CHAIR—It has been put to us that sustainable households combine to make sustainable neighbourhoods, which create sustainable suburbs, which lead to sustainable cities. We have had some examples where local councils have been pathfinders for their residents and their businesses, whether it is incentives to have commercial fit-outs with thoughtful lighting and temperature control or housing with attributes that are valued and more sustainable than others, and including little publications saying to households, 'You keep hearing we are short on water. The three buckets a day that you can save equals this.' It is really 'how to' information—a bit like picking up the recycling ethos, where, shown the tools and hearing the arguments, we had more of the stuff than we knew what to do with. They are trying to capture that a little bit. Do you feel that agendas like Local Agenda 21 and ICLEI's work and some of the stuff going on in your own councils and areas are helping to bring about gradual behavioural change—

Mrs Bunnell—And identification.

CHAIR—amongst humans that they can associate with?

Mr Wight—They are to an extent, but to another extent they are perhaps undermined in some instances by counterincentives like the things that we talked about before, such as the fringe benefits tax that tells us that we have to drive a big car 40,000 kilometres a year—those sorts of things. So the public is getting mixed messages, and I think if we have ways to redirect some of

those countermessages and put them through a sustainability sieve so that we are getting a more consistent message—

CHAIR—So it is valued all the time, not some of the time.

Mr Wight—That is right. Then it will be much more understandable. But the public are very confused when they are getting opposing messages.

Mr Ricketts—We have just done some interesting research into public attitudes to sustainability. We are going to have to do some more research into this to see if it is as real as it seems, but our generation, if you like, is very resistant to regulation. We still think that incentives and education are going to get us there. There seems to be a disjunct now with the younger generation—I would characterise that as under 30, which is an indication of how old I am, I guess—and they are starting to say: 'We will not act individually. We fully support water conservation or whatever initiative it might be, but I as an individual am not going to save the planet and I do not have enough confidence that everybody else is going to do it.'

CHAIR—Too many passengers?

Mr Ricketts—Too many passengers or free-riders—whatever you call them. They are saying, 'We want regulation because, if I'm going to save water, I want to make sure that Ann is saving water too.' That is a different framework or different psychological construct to our generation.

CHAIR—Can you send us the work?

Mr Ricketts—I will check on that.

CHAIR—Or what you are able to once you get it through the council.

Mr Ricketts—It might be easier now, actually! I do not know if it is a change or if this is just an artefact of the research—it was quite a big piece of research and that was the thing that really stood out to me. We have been running this educative message for quite some time and it seems that we have built a mandate for regulation—a political and social mandate for actually doing that. But from the individual's point of view it is: 'I am not going to be the well-intentioned loner. I want one in, all in.'

CHAIR—What about in Townsville? What kind of things are going on and are working to encourage Townsville citizens to behave in a more sustainable way?

Mrs Bunnell—You gave the illustration before of informing your community. Our big push is the reef—the Great Barrier Reef is a crucial part. I chaired a group that looked at local government impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. We are very concerned about that. Greg enlarged on the carbon neutral program. 'Creek to coral' is another one. That is the combined Townsville, Thuringowa and state government initiative to maintain and enhance healthy waterways. It is a Healthy Waterways project with a difference in terms of the Great Barrier Reef. We have just completed a Healthy Cities plan, which looks at environment and sustainability in its broader sense. It is based on the Ottawa charter. We are very proud of this document. When we started we were looking at preventative proactive health measures for our community. This has now

grown into an umbrella plan for all we do. Health has become a major part of it, but so has environment sustainability.

CHAIR—Can you leave a copy of that with us?

Mrs Bunnell—I would like to table that. We also did a state of the environment report, which we have on CD and we can send to you. We began that process as a way of auditing ourselves in council to see how we are doing. That has grown into a huge area where we showcase all the different programs. I will table that too. There is no singing and dancing, but it is very interesting.

CHAIR—I have seen the Gold Coast one, and that will make your hair curl! Dyan, in the development approvals area, do you supply information to developers, like advice that kentucky bluegrass is going to be really dumb? How does that interaction take place?

Ms Currie—Those sorts of things are a fundamental component of Integrated Planning Act schemes. ESD is one of the foundation principles of the act, which was introduced in 1997. Working out how that works and how you fight that through with the development industry is another side.

CHAIR—We got a taste of that ourselves.

Ms Currie—You would have. My council has a very strong approach to basic environmental protection, and that has done them some damage electorally, as it has done in many councils. It is important to find the hook, whether it is you guys finding the hook at a federal level or us implementing it at a local level. We are currently running the WaterWise programs. It is important to find very specific examples that catch attention. We have a massive program to regenerate the Gowrie Creek waterway—the waterway that runs through our city. While that was working well and we had community days and school education programs, interestingly enough it was only when our current mayor started to walk the city and talk about the fact that every single thing we put into that creek—or the drains that end up in that creek—ends up in the Murray-Darling Basin that people started to relate that to what they see on television about salinity issues and problems at a national level and they became more socially protective.

CHAIR—So we can thank Toowoomba.

Ms Currie—It was interesting to watch the community suddenly turn a bit and start to support what was a very strong push from our mayor and council, and now they are very strongly supportive of it. But they took a battering for that fundamental—there was a lot of money attached to that program.

CHAIR—Do you guys use any of the ICLEI stuff?

Ms Currie—Yes.

Mrs Bunnell—We have not talked about political rule today and that is a huge issue.

CHAIR—We still have a chance to do that because the coffee is holding off for a few minutes. We might just run through the behavioural stuff and then come to that.

Mrs Bunnell—Can I give another example that is huge for us?

CHAIR—Go ahead.

Mrs Bunnell—We fought and we had to change some of the council staff's ideas in the engineering area, and we had the Prius—

CHAIR—Civil engineers, eh!

Councillor Robbins—Did you achieve that?

Mrs Bunnell—We had the Toyota Prius car. They are a little more expensive but, as Harry said earlier, the overall benefits are huge, and now we have commercial operators asking whether they can use the Prius to pick up people from the airport to show what can be done with this. It is a Toyota car—does everyone know about the Toyota Prius?

CHAIR—Yes. The new one is much spunkier than the old, ugly one.

Mrs Bunnell—The one we have is very spunky. I would give it a rating of 10. But, as to political will, without it sometimes you go to the wall. I think sustainability is about how you manage conflict and bring in different disciplines; how you bring in not only government but commercial operators. We are having success in that and I think that is something that should be acknowledged—that you have to bring these people into the group and talk about it.

CHAIR—But you have made it sexy as well with a couple of your projects.

Mrs Bunnell—We have some very sexy projects.

CHAIR—People have been really wide-eyed, thinking: 'Oh, that's interesting!'

Mrs Bunnell—We have done that deliberately because the whole thing is about getting the best outcome for our area, especially in the tropics—and we are in the dry tropics too, so that is an added challenge to us.

Councillor Robbins—We are involved in Cities for Climate Protection and Local Agenda 21 . We have actually reached either the fourth or the fifth level of introducing various programs throughout the city. We are implementing them whole-of-city, and we have our state-of-environment report and our water future program. The water future program is particularly interesting in that it is a whole urban region—the unfolding region of Coomera and Pimpama. We are looking at recycling water, having a second water source to every house—stormwater tanks on every home, rainwater tanks on every home—and really looking at being the most sustainable that we possibly can in this new greenfield area. It is an initiative that we have pushed forward. But I wonder really, with Local Agenda 21 , whether we have actually promoted it. We have the WaterWise program and we have our water catchment program. We have changed the lamps throughout buildings and cities. We have looked at gas driven motor vehicles

rather than petrol driven. Those sorts of things we apply right across the board. But I think that perhaps, whilst we are doing it internally, it is not being totally embraced, if you like.

CHAIR—It is still a bit of a novelty?

Councillor Robbins—Perhaps once again it goes back to education. Whilst we get some media exposure in relation to it, it is just not being embraced—

CHAIR—More widely.

Councillor Robbins—more widely throughout people's homes. When it starts to get into people's homes and affect their day-to-day living, you feel that you are really having an impact. Perhaps it is just in its infantile stages and we need to push it further. But certainly we have the initiatives in place.

CHAIR—Just to wrap up: Wally, you are Prime Minister for a day. You have one big decision. What is it going to be?

Mr Wight—The decision will be to drive an urban agenda, because the largest proportion of the population of my country lives in urban areas.

CHAIR—Sharp political antenna there, Wally.

Mr Wight—A lot of the inefficiencies and social, economic and environmental difficulties are driven by the pressures of urban growth and therefore I will adopt an urban agenda to deal with those issues.

CHAIR—Thank you, Prime Minister. Prime Minister Greg?

Mr Hoffman—I like the idea of a national sustainability commission; it is an initiative that the Commonwealth could take. But I realise that it will not work unless it engages all levels of government and that we at the Commonwealth level should not be unilaterally decreeing here what should happen but should in fact look to find out what can best happen by ensuring that all of the people that can contribute to that outcome have had a part to play.

CHAIR—Prime Minister Hoffman, we are putting it on the COAG agenda and chewing around what it looks like and how it might work. Is that the process that you would see initially to shape it up?

Mr Hoffman—I think you probably have state governments who might feel somewhat threatened by a Commonwealth initiative in this area, given that they have probably traditionally seen urban affairs as their business. But the issue is that, if we approach it in a way that is not about trying to exclude the states or, for that matter, local government, we would probably get buy-in and they might be interested in a classic collaboration.

CHAIR—Thank you. Prime Minister Robbins?

Councillor Robbins—Prime Minister Robbins; well there you go.

CHAIR—It has a ring to it.

Councillor Robbins—I would reintroduce a national cities program under similar guidelines to the Better Cities Program and, in doing so, would be able to assist all regions and growing areas throughout Australia and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So it would be a back door to actually delivering on a sustainable society and reduction—

CHAIR—So a high insistence on sustainability principles and not, 'We would like a skate bowl around the corner; would the feds pay for it?'

Councillor Robbins—Exactly. It would be a Better Cities Program but with a sustainable agenda.

CHAIR—So it would be a more sustainable cities program?

Councillor Robbins—Exactly.

CHAIR—Thank you, Prime Minister. Prime Minister Mark Ricketts, your career in Brisbane City Council precedes you.

Mr Ricketts—I will take all of the previous.

Councillor Robbins—He is a cheat, you see; he grabs everybody else's policies!

Mr Ricketts—By the time it comes to Dyan she is going to be a bit lost, I would say.

CHAIR—No; the line is, 'They've said what I was going to say'!

Mr Ricketts—I guess the one thing we have not touched on too much here is the social dimension to this—we sort of started to. I think that is critical, because we do live in a democracy and at the end of the day, if there is not a mandate to do things, then it will not happen. Picking up on Wally's focus on the cities, I think it has to go beyond cities; it is regions. Townsville found that with Thuringowa growing up on its borders because of greater planning or controls within Townsville; we have had the same thing in Brisbane. So, rather than sustainable cities, I would say sustainable regions is the federal focus.

CHAIR—So you would invite any population centre to participate, recognising that the scale of the challenges and the scale of the benefits may be different?

Mr Ricketts—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Prime Minister. Prime Minister Ann, you would move the capital to Townsville?

Mrs Bunnell—As the president of Australia, I believe sustainable cities must be liveable, equitable and sustainable; that community conviviality is related to the web of social relations and sense of ecosystems, including air, water, soil and the food chain. Economic adequacy

means having a level of economic activity that meets the needs of the residents—those who live in our cities.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Councillor Robbins—This person has had time to prepare a speech!

Mrs Bunnell—No. I did that last night.

CHAIR—Written, spoken and authorised by Ann.

Mrs Bunnell—I have already been recorded in *Hansard* about the presidency versus the monarchy, and so I could not let the opportunity go.

CHAIR—Your lapel flowers blossomed well there. That was good. President, Prime Minister, Head of State Dyan, what is your call for the day?

Ms Currie—I think it has all really been said! I do think that, interestingly enough, the three key components of Queensland's base planning act—economic, community and environmental sustainability—are the three things that are fundamental. I think that the national planning and sustainability commission—I will just broaden that somewhat—is critical. I think there has to be a federal debate, federal education programs and federal support for some very strong state and local government initiatives. There is a lot of work being done out there that could be assisted and potentially guided along.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your time and generous input today. Just as food for thought: we have been chastised for talking about triple bottom line at another hearing, when it is actually four legs of the one stool that all need to improve together, with the fourth leg being governance. The way we go about conducting ourselves, and the conversations, the values we espouse and how we can do all this together, are just as critical as all the other stuff. There is something that you guys can think about.

Councillor Robbins—So they have pulled out the triple bottom line and put you on a stool, have they?

CHAIR—They have. There are so many lines that could come from that! Thank you for your input. If you have ideas, send them in. I will ask one of my colleagues to move that the documents tabled—

Ms Currie—Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR—Thank you, Sue, and we will see you tomorrow. Mark, good luck with your phone, and Ann with the city of paradise up in Townsville.

Mrs Bunnell—Come and see it. You should. You were supposed to be there.

CHAIR—Peter Lindsay still keeps telling me that. Can I ask one of my colleagues to move that the documents tabled by the Townsville City Council and Brisbane City Council be received

as evidence? Thank you, Ms George. All those in favour; all those against? The ayes have it. Could I ask that Mark check his research. We would be interested in that if it is available. If not, such is life.

Proceedings suspended from 3.01 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.

LILLIS, Mr James Harold, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for your submission; we appreciate it. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament. Consequently they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and it may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. On that cheery, warm and welcoming note, is there any opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr Lillis—Yes, there is, and I will endeavour not to bring myself into contempt. I thank the committee for reading the submission and for giving me the opportunity to appear today. I realise that it was a lengthy submission and I thank you for your endurance.

CHAIR—It is a good weight—you win on the 'weightometer'!

Mr Lillis—Yes. I am pleased to see that the federal government has maintained an interest in urban issues. This includes the first home buyers inquiry and the sustainability inquiry, which stretches back some time. I am sure that by this time the committee has come head to head with the difficult question of defining exactly what sustainability is. It is a difficult question but, though my experience—and to my surprise, I might add—I found that an effective way of looking at sustainable futures is through one's imagination. It is unconventional.

I invite the committee and those present to picture in your minds, just for a couple of moments, an urban area that you know well—possibly an area within your electorate. Imagine that you live in this area in 2025 and much has changed and much progress has been made. Thanks to technological improvements, your home is a pleasant and comfortable place to live—in all seasons. Your home garden is both aesthetically pleasing and productive if you wish it to be. It complements your home well. In fact all the systems around your home work together, and remarkably well. This is also true of the local places of business. When you eat you have greater confidence in the quality and safety of your food. When you travel you feel more confident that your journey is not impacting on the environment. Government and private services are readily accessible to your area. Getting around just isn't the hassle that it once was. The idea of waste has taken on a new meaning, for now there are productive uses for most of the things that we used to throw away. The valuable cultural features of your area have been preserved for posterity, and all this with minimum impact on the natural environments of your area, which are being rehabilitated and conserved.

In my opinion such a reality is a significant and worthwhile improvement, but it is not necessarily a sustainable future. It is more a triumph of technology. There is a lot in that world which has not changed from what we experience in the present. There is still the potential for great problems of loneliness, anxiety and depression; illness; substance abuse; high unemployment and crime; insufficient welfare; the meltdown of key local industries; malaise; poverty; and injustice. While it is easy to ignore these issues when you are looking at the technical details, it is important to remember that they can break down the fabric of all that holds us together.

I believe that sustainability for any society is based on several key points based around the needs of people. And there is nothing to say that we are not taking action towards some of these—indeed some societies do it very well. The point is that these ideas are interlinked and coordinated action must be taken to yield results. The first point in this is the need to reconnect people to the ecology and to an awareness and responsibility for their impact on it. The second point is to provide opportunities for meaningful work and sustainable workplaces. The third point is to provide a basic measure of cradle-to-grave security for all members of the community, or at least educate them on how this might be achieved. The fourth point is to reconnect people to the community, and the community to decision-making, and to reward the community for achievements in this field. The fifth point, and perhaps the most nebulous, is to provide the opportunity for people to reconnect with themselves and their real intrinsic needs and, within all of this, endeavour to provide for as wide a degree of lifestyle choice as possible.

Once again, I am not suggesting action is not being taken in this area. These are the points which I believe would be followed by a sustainable society—this includes the technical aspects. I believe that sustainability could be a unique selling point for Australia overseas, and we are already seeing this. A number of our consultancies—both mainstream and alternative—do quite well in Asia and the rest of the world. Personally, I was motivated to respond to the inquiry's call for submissions because I have a vested interest in urban sustainability. I have lived in urban areas all of my life—in a variety of densities. I am a practising town planner, but I am not an academic. All of my research into sustainability is based on my on-the-ground experience and out-of-hours work. I am also fairly green and, admittedly, I am still cutting my teeth in this profession.

CHAIR—Green as in?

Mr Lillis—Green as in 'new', although it works both ways.

CHAIR—If the cap fits.

Mr Lillis—My day-to-day work is actually focused on infrastructure planning, particularly infrastructure network design at a strategic level, and financial planning for infrastructure. I would have loved to have been on the panel before because a lot of things that they talk about I am actually planning for for the future. In short, I do a lot of bean counting a lot of the time. While they are at home waiting for a birdie to come and tell them that the local government needs to fund their activities, I am still at work trying to crunch the numbers to make it all stack up. The compilation of this submission makes quite a change of pace for me. Therefore, you will see some sentiment and at times a lack of objectivity—

CHAIR—A bit of passion—there is nothing wrong with that.

Mr Lillis—A bit of passion. Despite this, I am confident that my input will make a positive difference to the inquiry. In the year 2025, I will be 45 years of age. I may still be working as a town planner—I am not sure—but I know that I will have an interest in these sorts of issues. I believe that many people in our society wish to see an improvement in our urban areas, particularly in the knowledge sectors of the development industry.

The technologies and strategies that are capable of producing more sustainable outcomes, as was noted before, are either in gestation or they already exist. Some have existed for a very long time. I think one of our key challenges is to look at the difficult question of how a cultural change might occur in the future. I, like many people, am daunted by the challenges that lie head, but I am also excited at the same time. I believe that we can take on these challenges and win. This has become an important part of my purpose in being, and I am not alone in this challenge. On that note, any purposeful assistance that the federal government could provide would be greatly appreciated. That is all I have at the moment.

CHAIR—Thanks for your submission. You refer to human sustainability outcome being the consequence of some of the technological and ecological sustainability issues, and a more robust economy and the like—Maslow would be impressed. You are right up the higher end of the needs hierarchy with self-actualisation, meaning, connectedness, purposeful life choice, personal security and those kinds of things.

The people in the gallery might not realise that yours was a 64-page submission, so it was very substantial. Bearing in mind the conversation we were having before, how do those human values and the virtue in us being here feature in some of the work that you have been doing? How is it valued in that process?

Mr Lillis—In the particular work that I do, I am actually in the process of planning a community facilities network for my shire.

CHAIR—Is that where the thousand submissions came in?

Mr Lillis—No. That was cleaning up for the white shoe brigade. I am actually in the process of planning for community facilities and this is my work. So we have got an idea of how many libraries, community houses, youth centres and neighbourhood houses we need in the future. These will factor into our infrastructure charges plans. So we have actually planned that network at a higher level, we have costed it, and now we are looking at operationalising that through infrastructure charges. So, if you construct a dwelling in our shire, if you contribute to new demand—and I must be careful here; I am not speaking for my local government—it is likely in future that you will actually have to pay a charge, much as you would for water and sewerage, to actually help purchase land for community facilities.

CHAIR—Was that work driven as a priority for your council because of the financial pressures they felt they were under because of human settlement? Or was it a more organic, altruistic motive that said, 'People don't want to live in just a space. They want to live in a community with these social infrastructures and social assets around them'?

Mr Lillis—Once again, I think it is a bit of both. I am not speaking for the council, but there is definitely a financial motivation for these charges. This is partly because, in the past, councils across south-east Queensland have been burnt in the development process because development does not provide the sorts of facilities that would have been expected by the incoming residents. We have seen a change—even within the time that I have lived in urban areas—from facilities coming online gradually to ready-made communities where we are just waiting for the trees to grow. In terms of these local 'land for community facilities' charges, we are trying to bring it up to an acceptable standard based on our desired standards of service. The Integrated Planning Act

allows us to do this. It allows us to do this for water, sewerage, roads, stormwater, parks and land for community facilities.

CHAIR—As I read your paper, I see some interesting paradigm shifts on some of the contemporary issues, where you are challenging us to not accept the current as a given that necessarily needs to be there. You conclude by saying: 'It's pretty easy to wimp out. The politics of this aren't that flash.' You point to some examples around the South East Busway and say: 'Stepping back from the here and now, there is something that is working. The people using it are actually doing more than their share of handling the transport effort in the south-east Brisbane corridor.' How do you see your paradigm shift being given light, when there are so many entrenched interests and people accepting some of the things that are the norm now as the way they should always be? How do you see that fresh look at some of these fairly straightforward problems that would lead to some of the conclusions you are advocating?

Mr Lillis—For a problem as complex as that, really, what you are looking at is some sort of multipronged approach. That is fairly obvious. We cannot just hit this on the head and watch it go. Certainly on the financial side I think eventually in more urban areas in Australia what you will see is greater levels of road pricing. This may occur as a result of the impacts which are brought about by our current transport pattern. I am aware of the contribution that fuel tax makes and that our roads are believed by some people to be a user-pays, self-funding system without subsidisation, but that does not mean that they are not making an impact. On the other hand, there is an issue about making it financially accessible to people, and this may ultimately end up including further subsidisation of public transport. I think education of people is an important aspect. I caught the train down here today from the Sunshine Coast. It took an hour and 45 minutes for a trip that typically takes about an hour and a half to drive, and in that time I was able to get a fair bit of preparation done. So educating people on the benefits obviously helps. In terms of accessibility, financial accessibility is not the end of it either. We have actually got to plan around things like the South East Busway and our urban rail network to make sure that we are getting the patronage we need. That means having stations within walking distance and so on. There is no easy answer to the question you have raised. It is a cultural shift, but there are things you can do to ease it.

CHAIR—Going to the conversation you were listening to before about regional planning: where things are upscaled so that there is not a single unit of governance carrying the whole can, is it your sense that that builds the kind of courage where one council is not on its own, or one jurisdiction is not tackling this on its own, and there is a group of people involved and together they have arrived at this need for a bit of courage? Do you think that is more likely to bring about the change that you are talking about, or is that still not going to give politicians the cover that they need to do these things even when it may seem to be out of step with prevailing public opinion but is necessary, nonetheless?

Mr Lillis—The regional planning process that we do have started out with a positive intent. It has created fairly positive structures. It has improved communication, and it has raised awareness of the fact that these environmental issues are certainly at a regional level; they are not necessarily based on local government boundaries. So in recognising what the problems are, I think a regional level approach is appropriate. I think it does build courage. We have seen the Office of Urban Management recently introduced by the state government, and I think this will provide further confidence to the local governments of south-east Queensland to be a little more

daring and take some of the hard steps, because this office will have a powerful backing in the government. My shire itself has just recently taken a very major step in the history of the shire to introduce the term 'urban containment boundaries' into the planning scheme.

CHAIR—Is this around the Nambour area?

Mr Lillis—This is Maroochy Shire, which is based in Nambour. This is really a major decision for the shire. Basically, if this motion goes through and is adopted by the public—in my infrastructure planning work, effectively I am looking at planning out to around 2030; we are one of the fastest growth areas in Australia, and there is a lot of growth that will occur in that time—we will need a regional planning process that can back us up in these sorts of decisions. So far, we have received support for urban containment, and this has been encouraging.

Ms GEORGE—On the issue of urban containment, you make reference to what happened in Portland. I do not know whether you could expand on that, but you make the point that 'unless everyone wins, no-one wins,' specifically in terms of access to affordable housing. Would you like to elaborate on that?

Mr Lillis—That was a little unconventional in my submission.

Ms GEORGE—Your whole submission was quite thought-provoking.

Mr Lillis—I can assure you that I can write technically. I actually submitted technical material on infrastructure charges to the first home buyers inquiry. What I said about Portland—that special quote—was based on a film that I saw recently, entitled *Bowling for Columbine*. I am not sure whether you are familiar with it. I think it is a powerful talisman for the sort of situation we may see in some of our cities. We may have rich enclaves, which can occur as a side effect of urban containment, and in essence we will have to truck in all the workers to service them. In my opinion, that is not socially sustainable. What we need to do to combat that—if we are going to contain the population and preserve our rural areas—is make sure that we are getting a mix of people within that containment. In my opinion, that is something we have to do. It may even mean constructing on a brownfield site. It is something we have to do in order to preserve some sort of healthy social mix, and it is better for the environment. People need workers to flip their hamburgers and all those sorts of things, and those workers might not be able to afford to live in rich urban enclaves unless there is intervention.

Ms GEORGE—In relation to your references to new urbanism, in my local area a new development has been proposed that is theoretically based on the principles of new urbanism. There has been a huge reaction from the local community about the density of the development, the small blocks of land, the narrow roads and the alleys at the back of the homes, which they see as potential grounds for all sorts of social problems to fester. You seem to be a little attracted to the notions of new urbanism. Can you expand on the virtues as you see them?

Mr Lillis—I am in two minds about new urbanism and concepts like this. I am still sitting on the fence as far as new urbanism versus traditional density goes. I have lived in both. I have found that in new urbanism type developments—I have lived in a townhouse and even in a one-bedroom apartment without a living space—there are problems. These are the problems of being confined, being able to hear your neighbours and not feeling that you have the space you need.

On the other hand, these areas are fairly well serviced. I did not notice any increase in crime or delinquency where I lived. Generally, these days, if well designed, a new urbanist development can adhere to the principles of CPTED—that is, crime prevention through environmental design. You can get a good design outcome.

As a young planner, I find the debate over densities a little misleading in terms of sustainability. I think the real question is: how do we do everything? The answer, which is difficult, is that we need to do everything well. We need sustainable models of new urbanism that are not going to produce these sorts of social problems. We need proven models which people can visit, and these exist. We also need to do traditional density a lot better. I am not sure whether that answers your question. New urbanism is great in terms of how it can foster patronage of public transport. I found it a lot easier, when I was living in townhouses, to catch the bus and that sort of thing. I think transport is its biggest ace. From there, in my experience, urban food production and feelings of privacy are the real drawbacks of this sort of development.

CHAIR—There is a dichotomy, though, isn't there?

Mr Lillis—Yes, there is.

CHAIR—The privacy question runs headlong into the sense of feeling safe. The perception of being observed builds a sense of safety and security, because you are not walking down an alleyway where you think nobody can see what is going on. But the flip side is that, for people to see what is going on, there is an inherent impact on the notion of privacy. I do not think the conversation has matured enough to say: 'It is not black or white but shades of grey, and we have to make some choices along that continuum. Here are the upsides of leaning a bit this way and here are the upsides of leaning a bit the other way.'

I was interested in your permaculture comments. I was not sure whether I was reading a Buddhist 'Reconnect with nature's systems to understand the impact you have on them' point of view, but it had a bit of that in it for me. Do you want to talk about your urban permaculture group and the proposition that it adds something to the sustainability of a community?

Mr Lillis—Sure; I am happy to talk about it. I am actually in day 9 of a permaculture design course. This is an integrated design science. Permaculture has a bad name: hydroponic buck choy comes up—

CHAIR—I would love to know what days 1 to 8 had in them. What was in them?

Mr Lillis—Drainage, roads.

CHAIR—So management of waters?

Mr Lillis—Soil, earth-working, patterns in nature and how they influence design—and that is about as far out as it gets. They also talk about problems facing the planet in terms of sustainability in urban areas and rural areas. I have learned a lot about the problems in rural areas of salination and flooding. There is also a lot of vegetation management. But really the crux of permaculture is that we need to design human systems that work as well as natural systems. In terms of managing our rural areas, we need to provide an agriculture that actually builds soil. If

you trace the roots of the word 'agriculture' you will find that that is what that word means: building the soil—and harvesting from the soil. Permaculture systems can actually achieve this.

I have been instructed by a world expert in permaculture by the name of Geoff Lawton. I am doing a course with him at the moment. He has actually succeeded in creating a food forest in a salt pan in Jordan in the Dead Sea area. We are talking 400 metres below sea level. I could refer you to web sites which talk about this sort of thing. These people have a great belief in what they can do and I draw a lot of positive energy out of it. I do not want to sound too alternative; I am a fairly conventional person. I was drawn to this sort of thing because I felt that I needed to be grounded in something that was more commonsense, and most of what I have heard just harks back to biology and geography as I studied them in high school, which are accepted largely without question.

CHAIR—We as a nation invest stacks of cash in understanding those natural systems for productive application and we are learning more about the ecological services that are supported by those natural systems. Are you in effect arguing that, if we made that same kind of investment in our human systems and our built form and things like that, we would probably be making some gains that we are not making now? It is really hard to know. It is so hard to find empirical evidence to back up things that seem intuitively true. One of the submissions we have had is to set up a cooperative research centre for urban settlement, because the experts are telling us we really have not got a clue; we do not know what it is we are measuring, what the measurement tools are and what are the metrics to know whether we are actually making a difference or not.

Mr Lillis—This is a difficult area and, while I like the idea of money being thrown towards local government, I am not always convinced that a capital intensive solution is required. Indeed, I am learning this through the course at the moment. I can come back to the garden, because I am keen to discuss that. But, really, building community may not come at a loss; I think it might come at a gain. I think it is about changing some ideas. What we are looking at in future is retirement of the baby boom generation and we will have a very large non-working population supported by people like me working full time. I think it is important to take care of the people who are working full time as well as those who are not. This may mean a shift in our working arrangements. This sounds a little far out, but just go with me on this.

I think what we might see is people wanting more time to work in the community in exchange for things like salary sacrifice or increased working hours during the day. I think that contributes a lot of social capital. It may even improve work productivity as well. If people feel that they are doing well in the community and that they are part of something, I think they can contribute more at work; I know I can.

In terms of neighbourhood development and community development at that level, this is really difficult. You go to some parts of the world, I am told, and the community is that strong that if you scream in the night you will have 50 people running to help, whereas I am not sure that I would have that in my street. I am no angel in this sense, either, but I thought about the way I came to meet my community in Nambour and the people in my street and it is not all that encouraging. There is a light there: there was a minor car accident and I met everyone through that. An errant vehicle ran into me.

CHAIR—Some misfortune brings people together.

Mr Lillis—Misfortune; neighbourhood watch—a bit of fear and gore there. But then I thought about it again and I thought a garage sale might be a good idea. I met people through that and I thought, well, if I managed to meet one neighbour through that, imagine the power of everyone deciding to clean out their junk and all hold a garage sale at once for half a day or a day. People need a context to communicate. It is not that I fear my neighbour or anything like that; I just fear looking like an idiot when I move in and say, 'Hi, I'm James.'

CHAIR—Yes, if you front up saying, 'Hi; I'd like to get deep and meaningful; I've got no real reason for it but here I am,' it is a good conversation starter, isn't it!

Mr Lillis—Yes, or it is convention, and I want to get out.

CHAIR—It is worse than dating!

Mr Lillis—But, if I have the opportunity to purchase something or sift through their old books, it is a real conversation starter. It is a great way to get greater efficiency from the stock of household appliances and goods that we have which just sit there. Households can be really inefficient in this way. Coming back to the garden, and I am not sure if I am getting off the topic here—

CHAIR—It is all right. I know Harry has some questions too.

Mr Lillis—Basically the garden which I am involved with has been developed along permaculture principles. It was developed from a dilapidated clay tennis court which the council gave to the group which I have become involved with since I moved up the coast. They did not dig up the clay; it is all grown on straw bales and compost.

CHAIR—What is the court: en-tout-cas? Scoria? What sort of court is it?

Mr Lillis—Clay; I am not exactly familiar with the geology of the court, but they have managed to use some of the clay from the court as well to line fish ponds and things like that. There are animals on this court, like chickens and guinea pigs, which they use to forage and maintain the garden. It is something like a market garden, so for permaculture it is really well displayed. My group also—and I guess I am one of the second-tier members; there is a bunch of hardcore volunteers out there as we speak—renovated an old federation era house, a worker's cottage. They are looking at turning that into a sustainable house, and it is a neighbourhood house, so the community can come in and hold meetings. Around it is a demonstration permaculture garden, which is about 600 metres square in size. What they are trying to model there is an urban permaculture garden that you could run on a traditional housing site. It has been a very inclusive group. They do environmental education and things like that as volunteers, and I think it is really necessary.

A lot of the focus with sustainability is what you do on the other side of the wire: the conservation and these sorts of issues—preservation of natural habitat. Personally I am more concerned with what goes on where I live and how sustainable that is. In terms of urban sustainability the incorporation of these sorts of gardens would be a really positive step in building community, because it builds people together. It brings people together to build things. For instance, I learned how to build a worm farm and I worked with an edge grinder for the first

time. I helped to build a cob oven from mud brick and I met a lot of the community doing that. This is coming from someone who grew up with computers and video games and had only sporadic interest at best in sustainability and commonsense sorts of things.

Mr JENKINS—In your submission you talk about Tokyo, which is arguably the largest urban gathering in the world but which is an aggregation of a series of villages that still has that—this tends to get back to some of the evidence we have had before us—strength of community or neighbourhood or whatever you want to call it, which is very important to sustainable cities. Listening to you talk about your permaculture group, it struck me that that was a subset. We could call it a community, but we might not call it a neighbourhood because it does not have the spatial relation—and you went to that. You spoke about your community and you were talking about a sense of space rather than your permaculture group, which was people coming together because of an interest.

Mr Lillis—Yes, it is a community of identity.

Mr JENKINS—Yes, but I still think that those communities of identity are just as important as the sort of neighbourhood community, and we have to give that flexibility by whatever tools we use. When you were talking about what you are doing at the moment it struck me that looking at social infrastructure and things like that are fairly important aspects of a sense of community, whether it be spatial, community of identity or whatever. But I was wondering whether you think there is something in that notion of the aggregation of the villages a la Tokyo that has to do with the Japanese culture and that is based on aeons of history.

Mr Lillis—That is possible. I have never been to Tokyo, so it is difficult for me to comment on that. Given the social fabric which they do have in Japan and the traditions which they have managed to uphold through modernisation, it would not surprise me if the village aspect has actually been planned around that purpose or has occurred through social pressure to maintain that. As far as I know, the only thing holding that city together is the fact that it is in villages. In terms of spatial communities, I think it is really important to know your neighbours—and not out of fear. They do not have to be your primary community, but I think it is important to know who these people are as a starting point. My personal history demonstrates community of identity as being much stronger than spatial community, and that is probably a side effect of where I grew up.

Mr JENKINS—Your suggestion about the garage sale also tends to illustrate the importance of commerce. If I look at the area I represent, one of the real problems about that social sustainability is that the corner store has gone and you have to travel to the shopping centre; shopping centres have moved to become even bigger and they are just somewhere where you go and do your business. There is none of the side benefit that you might get from knowing well the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker; it is just lacking in that now. I do not know how we can actually put that into the planning or change our cultural context of place to get that other advantage that has gone from our commercial world.

Mr Lillis—Once again, it is a difficult question of how we go back to locals and maintain a sense of human scale in our urban areas. Planning schemes can assist this by allowing commercial to occur as a mixed use with residential. This is not without problems. What you have hit on is an important issue. I think that to be able to support a local businessperson is a

good thing and it is becoming more difficult. I have seen this in my own region. A big box retailer has just moved into Nambour and may possibly drive out some of the local business operators.

I am not sure whether I have the answer to what you are hitting at. The garage sale idea was primarily based on the need for a context of communication on gaining greater efficiency from household stock. The best I could say is that planning schemes can assist us in this regard and we can plan for it but it will come down to someone identifying a business opportunity within the local area for that to happen. I can proudly say that my corner store still exists—there are two of them that still compete—so it has not gone yet. Walkable scale, though, is important. I am fairly lucky because I can walk around on most of my trips; Nambour is designed that way.

CHAIR—About 25 years ago we had a planning scheme that was based on the provision of a milk bar or corner store for about every 800 to 1,000 houses but that produced marginal business. I think they then dispensed with that, which means that nothing is within walkable distance, unless one is keen like you and walks everywhere. It becomes a problem. You stressed how you arrived here today and you also mentioned it in your submission. It is an interesting point that people do not consider the two hours that they think they are stuck in public transport as productive time as against the hour or 1½ hours in the private vehicle, when they get nothing done. There were times in my life when, to get that half-hour to do something else, I would throw the other hour away, whereas if I were on public transport I would be able to do things, even if it were just to relax.

I thought it was a great piece of lateral thinking about shopping bays in public parks on the basis that that is what people do. It had not really struck me that you could see as an opportunity something that people see as a problem. Perhaps if you encourage people to do that they might decide not to be so reliant on the private vehicle.

I thought you had a good discussion with Jennie about the new urbanism. I suspect that the answer is for new developments to have a combination that suits the spectrum of people's needs. By getting the mix, you might not have those other problems. It might be that the homogeneity of terrace housing everywhere, as against what we might call traditional housing everywhere, brings the problems. Being more determined to mix it is something that we would hope is sustainable. I acknowledge that in outer urban areas like those that I represent the notion is that the higher density along the core for public transport drifting off to larger lots is the way to go. But I try to work out whether, once you are in the larger lot and the furthest from public transport, you are then absolutely forced to use private transport.

Mr Lillis—In essence, some areas will be designed for private transport. Even in 2025 it will not be feasible to support all urban areas with public transport. I make particular reference to the rural residential subdivisions that we see so much in south-east Queensland. I understand that it is more of a south-east Queensland phenomenon than it is in any other state. There is still a place for all these different forms of development in a sustainable city and it is important that we do not lose sight of that. The important thing to look at is how best we can do each form of development. We need to hit with public transport where we can win. That has been focused on by, as I understand it, Brisbane City Council and the Western Australian department of transport in its consultations with the public.

There will be some areas that we will not be able to serve with public transport, and they will rely on private transport. We should try to minimise them in our planning, all else being equal, but there will still be those areas. But those areas will present other advantages. If we are talking about rural residential areas, we could look at fairly intense food production for the local centre and so on. So the problem once again is the solution. This is something that they are ramming into us quite strongly in the permaculture culture course which I am currently undertaking.

CHAIR—You say in your submission that sustainability is very knowledge intensive and there is a fatal error made when one just picks up imported solutions from somewhere else and plonks them in another locale. How do you see the process of sharing that knowledge such that it enables as broad a constituency as possible to pick up the insights, the tools and the wherewithal to live more sustainability and to enable that improved sustainability to be achieved not at the expense of living standards but maybe as an enhancement of them? How do you think that would best work with some of the thoughts you have been having? Is there anything your council in particular is doing around that that gives us some insights we should take note of?

Mr Lillis—I will speak for the council second. In terms of communicating this set of principles at the broader level of sustainability and how it is done, what you need to start with is principles. Then you work through to tools and only then do you back it up by case studies. If we mirror something that has been done in another area we may end up with something that is unsustainable. For this reason local government needs to be a major leader in sustainability, simply because that local knowledge is there, whereas at a higher level, where you are importing professionals, it may not be there. That progression of principles to tools to case studies is really important.

CHAIR—We need that context, too, that you were talking about where there is that exchange and conversation had to share those insights with other people.

Mr Lillis—Just following on, Hans Westerman's work is fairly good at showing a progression. You will find this in *Cities for Tomorrow* by Austroads. What he has assembled there is a tool kit of approaches which you can apply to your transport issues, wherever you are in urban Australia. That approach has a lot of merit. If that approach was mirrored in the findings of this inquiry that would be workable for a lot of local governments. That is my view.

In terms of what my council does well in sustainability, there are a number of initiatives. In my opinion, my council is fairly strong on this. I am happy to work there. In a way, they have turned a problem into a solution as well. I see a view there that we live in a great region and there is not a willingness to accept mediocre development for too much longer. The planning chief of council was quoted in the headlines in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* on the front page as saying, 'No means no.' That was an important shift for us. The council has backed him up on that.

Specifically within council's activities there is a unit, called Maroochy Greenhouse, which looks at urban sustainability and, aside from that, conservation and the improvements you can make within your house. They assembled a demonstration house in a trendy suburb of Maroochy, and sold it, I understand, at a profit. The name of that structure was Brahminy House, if you care to look it up. That is where we are pushing the envelope of sustainability a little further.

Ms GEORGE—You make the point, somewhat incidentally, about the disparities in terms of people being able to access the latest technologies. You talk about people who live on the Gold Coast being able to pay for the technologies that are environmentally sympathetic, whereas others do not have the means to do that. Do you see that one of the emerging developments will be that, as more and more of the communities at the top end of the market become more ecosensitive, we will leave others behind and that we will get a kind of polarisation between disparate communities—very much dependent on the means of accessing these technologies? What can we do about that so that we do not have this kind of divide between the affluent and the not so affluent?

Mr Lillis—What we are seeing already, and on a global level as well, is that technological lag which you seem to reference in your question—the areas that do the sustainability issue very well, through technological approaches, and areas that are still very far behind. This will continue to be an issue. It will be an issue in 2025. In light of this lag, it is important to do what you can, for a start. A lot of these changes which can lead to great improvements in sustainability are behaviour intensive rather than capital intensive.

The second thing is that the changes that you can make in technology need not be all that expensive. Here we start to enter the realm of some alternative technologies which we see on the fringe of sustainability. I will use Brahminy House as an example. Here we have an energy efficient house that was constructed at the same price as a typical dwelling. The total cost—and I may need to check this later—came to about $130,000, and it was a great building. As I understand it, the costs were reduced through the use of sustainable materials.

I would like to bring up a favourite story of mine which I think is analogous to this problem. I heard from an engineer friend that NASA recently invented a pen in response to the problems astronauts have when they are in space. NASA spent millions of dollars inventing this pen which is just like a normal pen but can write in every direction; the Russians took pencils. What I am trying to say is that you can achieve the same outcome without spending all that money. It is important to think about how you might do that. I realise that may not be the best answer. If I can respond again later, I might be able to provide greater insight on that question.

CHAIR—Thank you. We really appreciate your thoughtful and thought-provoking submission. It was quite a treat. It was quite different from many that we have received. There was a bit more romance in it than many, drawing out the reasons why these things need to be done and not just how to go about them. Thank you for making yourself available today to speak to the committee.

[4.08 p.m.]

SPEARRITT, Professor Peter, Executive Director, Brisbane Institute

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that these are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. I now invite you to make some introductory comments. Congratulations on your appearance, on the coast, in the media in the last few days.

Prof. Spearritt—For those of you who do not watch *Lateline* on a Friday night—and I did not watch it—it was an appearance on *Lateline*. The development at Port Melbourne provided a rather marvellous backdrop. At the time of the ABC interview, there were an extraordinary number of—

CHAIR—Tonka toys.

Prof. Spearritt—Tonka toys right on the beachfront, so the whole question of developers' responsibilities was right there; the environment of Port Phillip Bay was raised. This conversation can go in any direction the committee wants it to. I have lived most of my life in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. I spent about eight years in Canberra, about 20 years in Melbourne and about 20 years in Sydney. I have been living here for 2½ years, so a lot of what I have to say about the environment of south-east Queensland reflects that experience.

I did a PhD in urban research at ANU in the mid-1970s. That was when Hugh Stretton's *Ideas for Australian Cities* came out, and there was a lot of debate then about where the cities were going. I welcome this committee because it seems to me that there has not been much national debate about the cities for a long time. It seems to me that a lot of the debate in some of the states remains very localised.

I see south-east Queensland as having a very particular problem at the moment. Last year, the Brisbane Institute did what we called a green space audit of Greater Sydney and Greater Brisbane. We defined two study areas which were 250 kilometres north-south and 140 kilometres east-west for both south-east Queensland and Greater Sydney. In those two study areas, 43 per cent of the Greater Sydney region is held in national parks and state forests, and 17 per cent of south-east Queensland is held in national parks and state forest. There are other bits of green space in both places, but it seemed to us that, with this very high proportion of land in south-east Queensland already not only privately owned but in an enormous array of subdivisional sizes, the whole question of how on earth you are going to house another million people here in the next 20 years is not just a massive environmental issue; it is a huge issue in land assembly. Because you have not had a land commission or its equivalent in south-east Queensland—and on the whole you have had them in the other capital cities—there are not even the large parcels of land here that the bigger developers tend to be looking for.

CHAIR—So you are getting spotty, lower-quality subdivision as a result of that?

Prof. Spearritt—Spotty, lower-quality or, back to some of the earlier discussion, the other end of the spectrum—that is, bizarrely expensive development. Noosa at the moment can partly have a population cap that is effective because everybody else is priced out of the market—it is marvellous. This is not even meant to be cynical; it is a very interesting political combination of a quite strong environmental movement—

CHAIR—Cashed up.

Prof. Spearritt—cashed up, who have also won over enough of what colloquially would have been called here the Noosa branch of the white shoe brigade. They have won them over, so you have a most unusual collectivity of interests which does not always arise. It has not arisen, obviously, in northern New South Wales, where everybody is at each other's throats, as you would know.

I guess my primary concerns have been the green space provision in south-east Queensland and the fact that for 40 years here now, as I see it, almost all the urban development has been driven by the freeways and by no other really strong government intervention in urban form. There is an odd explanation for this in a way. As you know, Brisbane has Australia's only metropolitan council, founded in 1925. I would guess that, until about the mid-seventies, that was adequate for the region. But when both the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast started to grow really rapidly, you suddenly had this incredibly powerful local government in the middle—Australia's only metropolitan government. It seemed to be running the show reasonably well, but then when you have these very strong population pressures from the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, it seems to me that the need for dramatic government intervention, not at the local but at the state or national level, certainly raises its head.

And to make a very obvious point: Brisbane is the only state capital incredibly near another state's border. So the decision making that is going on in the south-east Queensland corridor has incredible impact now on the fate of northern New South Wales and vice versa. Just to give you a marvellous bit of local politics: there is great bitterness on the Sunshine Coast that your average Brisbanite can now escape Queensland on the freeway that bypasses Murwillumbah and be in Brunswick Heads or Byron Bay quicker than they can be in Noosa. These are intractable issues in federal-state relations obviously, but the level of cooperation that I think we need in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales—in terms of green space provision, public transport provision, sensible expenditure decisions on where the road network is going to take us and what the implications are—is not always happening.

CHAIR—So you are saying that the second incarnation of the south-east Queensland regional plan, which we heard was a great leap forward, still seems to be suboptimal in a number of respects?

Prof. Spearritt—Do you mean the one in the early 1990s or the one that is currently being promised?

CHAIR—You are right; that is presumptuous of me. I mean the one in gestation that recognised the shortcomings of just plonking urban sprawl in different places and recognised that there are other parts to people's lives. Those things are supposed to be in the new plan, but you are saying they still might fall short on meta-regional planning issues.

Prof. Spearritt—I hope they will not, but I think they will certainly fall short of the two-state meta-regional planning issues just because they have to—because of the jurisdictional issue, which is where I think the federal government's role is quite interesting. A particular example is: what is the hierarchy of the airports on the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and Coolangatta? That is relevant because we now know these are important as employment generators. Where does that take us? If you build up the Ballina airport, what are the implications of that? Right now the Brisbane airport has over 14 million passengers a year, Coolangatta has about 2.5 million and the Sunshine Coast has over 300,000. So you have got really big infrastructure decisions being taken by highly sectional interests, and I am not just saying this because of privatisation.

To give you an absolutely fascinating example at the moment, the Brisbane Airport Corporation want to put yet another car based shopping centre near the airport. It beggars belief really. Brisbane already has far too many car based shopping centres. If you did a really hard economic analysis of rental returns in them and the cash flow on the floor, you would close a few in a more rational society.

This probably applies in other states too, although I am more familiar now with the bureaucratic issues here. Until the mid-1990s, when government departments here sold land the money went entirely to consolidated revenue. Now, as I understand it—and I cannot guarantee this but this is my impression—they keep half about the revenue. So quite a number of government departments are starting to regard themselves as, if you like, land entrepreneurs trying to sell for the highest use.

As a philosophical position, in a society where we are 85 per cent urbanised we do not actually allow people at the moment in many instances to sell their land for the highest use anyway. There is a kind of culture of thinking that the highest value would come from a shopping centre near the airport, because obviously land near the airport would not be good for upmarket residential use. So there is a sense that land ought to always be exploited for the highest use in a highly localised notion of what is good. So the Airport Corporation is obviously wondering what is good for the Airport Corporation, but what about implications for traffic movements on the Gateway et cetera?

Ms GEORGE—There has been a common refrain about the withdrawal of Commonwealth and national interest in urban development—cities. What constructive things do you think the Commonwealth may be able to do, or how might it engage? We have heard how we might use the taxation system; but in a more philosophical way, what is the role of a Commonwealth government in these areas that we have been talking about? What could we constructively do?

Prof. Spearritt—When you look back at the sorts of things Commonwealth governments have done over the last 30 years, one that most amazes me—as I say, I have only been here for a couple of years and I have only recently found this out—is that it was Better Cities that paid for the Robina railway; that is about 80 kilometres from Brisbane into the Robina town centre. To imagine now the Gold Coast without any form of fixed track public transport would be extraordinary. You can actually get from Robina on a quite good rail line and then out to the airport in an hour and a half on a train—in other words, from a fair bit of the Gold Coast. If there is a single crash on the Gateway it is going to take you up to six hours to get to the airport.

I guess the issue is: who pays for the chunkier bits of infrastructure—and clearly the Commonwealth is putting a lot of money into the roads system. A real commitment to some public transport spines in all of our capital cities, I think, is something that the Commonwealth could still do. You would have to be very targeted about it. Only six per cent of journeys to work, actually, in south-east Queensland are by public transport; if you take the area from Gosford to Wollongong, it is 14 per cent. People who knock public transport always say, 'Well, those percentages are pretty small, aren't they?' and they always are in the grand sense. But, no doubt as everybody on this committee would be well aware, if you took the public transport systems away from Sydney or Melbourne, they would cease to operate as cities at particular peak times. I guess I see the philosophical rationale for Commonwealth intervention here as being the issues facing the two states in this coastal strip, and regrettably in a sense the coastal strip is getting longer and longer. We are still primarily thinking of Noosa to the Tweed but—

CHAIR—So a 200-kilometre city.

Prof. Spearritt—Indeed, a 200-kilometre city, which I regret to say is a kind of a concept that has caught on here a bit better than I thought it would, and now people fear, as you have no doubt heard, the 300-kilometre city from Bundaberg to Byron Bay. What protects a lot of the New South Wales coast compared with Queensland is a phenomenal number of national parks—major coastal parks around Yamba and Iluka and just south of Brunswick Heads. Back to the Commonwealth question that Jennie George was posing, I guess through things like the World Heritage properties act there has been some Commonwealth encouragement. I think that philosophically and by example the Commonwealth's role in some of those World Heritage property nominations has made people think about Australian as well as local and state issues. If we were in New South Wales, people would think it was unbelievable that there is still sand mining on Stradbroke Island. There is still sand mining on Stradbroke Island—it is not regarded here as so unusual. This is indicative. About a week ago I had a debate about the 200-kilometre city with Chris Freeman, who is the CEO of Mirvac in Queensland. We were at loggerheads, of course, until he said that in the early 1960s he loved going to Bribie Island as a boy. So I said to Chris, 'Well, should the Bribie Island bridge have been opened in 1963?' and he agreed with me that it should not have been—there is a lobby to have a bridge to Stradbroke.

Ms GEORGE—What is happening in Sydney is now happening in Brisbane and its surrounding areas: inner city areas are becoming very gentrified and very expensive. Then there are the old working-class suburbs that are really run down, with a lot of broadacre public housing, and the more affluent middle-class people are moving on to the urban fringe in walled townships or villages and developments. Is that also happening here?

Prof. Spearritt—It is. There is spectacular gentrification along the river. The most intriguing bits are a little like what is occurring in Sydney. The equivalent of the Colgate-Palmolive factory on the Brisbane river has been turned into very expensive housing. To me, the most egregious symbol of this is the Harry Seidler designed Riparian Plaza, which is just down the road from us and right on the river front. For the cars there are six storeys of above-ground parking and per floor it is a million dollars plus; so everything is a penthouse, really. But, as for the cars having above-ground parking, if you were an absolute economic rationalist you would say that this new residential palace is in the middle of vastly oversubsidised public transport of every sort. It has a ferry terminal at its doorstep; it has a railway station five minutes away; and it has four different bus lines on the street outside. The gentrification is widespread. I think Brisbane's egalitarianism

rests very heavily on rather decayed boarding houses, which still exist in the inner ring suburbs here. Places like New Farm, Woolloongabba, West End and so on still have them. It is hard to see them lasting much longer.

CHAIR—Because of those development pressures?

Prof. Spearritt—That is right, because of the development pressures. Obviously the area will go rather high density again, but the committee will also be aware of the marvellous kinds of ironies of declining household size in Australia. As in Sydney and Melbourne, we are looking at suburbs with houses which in the 1920s would have had four or five people living in them, and now they have somewhere between 1.2 and 2.3 people, or something like that.

Ms GEORGE—Yet on the urban fringe they continue to build 30- to 40-square homes in a lot of the new housing developments.

Prof. Spearritt—Indeed; you get that on the fringe. South-east Queensland's level of rural residential development is probably more on the scale of Melbourne's than Sydney's; on the whole, the land in Sydney is too expensive now for people to afford two or three acres. Going up towards Maleny there is a heck of a lot of rural residential development around the Glasshouse Mountains and down towards Mount Tambourine.

The co-author of my submission is a kind of economic rationalist. The lack of economic rationalism, whatever one's political views, for me is summed up by the fact that the Brisbane City Council gives a lovely subsidy of $500 with buying a water tank. That means that you can have a 3,000 gallon water tank for probably about $1,200, after having had that subsidy. The water in the tank at the moment only costs you $3, and so it is going to take you a long time to feel that you have got your money back. We see the same sorts of things with the pricing of electricity. People are now used to the thought that you pay for water, but we are not sending the right price signals.

CHAIR—The argument around tools to bring about change often comes back to the kind of conversation you were just starting. It is pointless tinkering at the edges because they are a new paradigm. Basically we are saying that, if we knew then what we know now, we probably would not be where we are now—but it is pretty exciting now to try to unscramble the eggs. You mention tax regulations and how they conspire against active transport options and the like. To remedy that, is there a need for overcompensation with undeniably virtuous things that would deliver broadscale community benefits, such as reduced health costs through reduced congestion and so on, or would you stick with costing in and transparently showing externalities on less virtuous things as a way of bringing about the kind of renewed equilibrium that you talk about?

Prof. Spearritt—I am inclined to think we need very dramatic intervention. Transparency gets you part way but only part way. It is a modest little example, but the single most bizarre aspect of fringe benefits tax in Australia is that, if you drive a vehicle more than 25,000 kilometres a year, you pay less fringe benefits tax. That is pretty damn weird.

CHAIR—It is a great country, isn't it!

Prof. Spearritt—So you get rewarded. If you will pardon a personal note, I retain a Canberra accountant with whom I discussed this issue a little while back before the Canberra public holiday in March; the FBT finishes on 31 March. I asked her where her clients were, and she said that they were all driving to the coast to get up their kilometres.

CHAIR—At least they are no longer putting their cars up on blocks and just letting them run.

Prof. Spearritt—That is true.

CHAIR—Getting consumers to be able to clearly discern between the costs of a less virtuous choice and the benefits of a choice we would seek to encourage, you say that we are not anywhere near that; it needs something quite spectacular.

Prof. Spearritt—Yes; big price signals. I would advocate that we increase the cost of excess water usage. Once you had worked out what a reasonable amount of water was for a typical household, I would advocate your upping the cost 10- to 20-fold immediately.

CHAIR—So you say that those who do not make a reasonable effort in contributing to where we wish to be with community standards should be starting to sense it fairly profoundly in their hip pocket.

Prof. Spearritt—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Do you subscribe to the idea that community education is just well-intentioned fluff which is largely unproductive?

Prof. Spearritt—Community education certainly has its place. But in a lot of these areas, if it is not backed up by price signals, I just cannot see it having enough impact promptly enough.

CHAIR—It relates a sense of proportion: if the public were really serious about A, it would send a strong price signal that B, the alternative, was really not valued at all. Do you think we are a bit wishy-washy on some of those things?

Prof. Spearritt—Absolutely too wishy-washy. I think John Paterson was the first head of a water board in the Hunter to introduce excess water pricing and, not picking on anybody in particular, the local Hawks Nest bourgeoisie on the whole were absolutely shocked, but they got used to it.

Mr JENKINS—I have no questions, Chair. You and the deputy chair have traversed my territory and have placed a sufficiently good ecological footprint on this submission.

CHAIR—You make a strong pitch for improved governance and that, if one factors in all the social externalities with decision making about approving private investment subdivisions and those kinds of things, governance holds the key. By that, do you mean that currently all the bits of the story are on the table and that choices are being made about whether or not to approve a development without questioning whether it is in keeping with our aspirations for the area in which it is being proposed and what domino effects it may have? Is that the kind of—

Prof. Spearritt—It is. I have been giving this a bit of thought just lately, because in various parts of Australia there is an enormous difference in development application procedures. In Brisbane, for instance, there is a great battleground in the inner- and middle-ring suburbs at the moment about redevelopment, as there is in every Australian city. Here, if you were doing an extension just to your own dwelling and you kept within the BCC guidelines, your neighbours would not know whether you were building a bungalow in your backyard or building an extension until you started building. They do not have a right of objection and no notice is posted. Somebody was telling me in Richmond, Melbourne, the other day that you are no longer allowed to change your deck timbers without putting in a building application. The level of transparency from neighbour to neighbour and then in the wider neighbourhood about what the actual development application is is a really big issue. The difficulty is that in a lot of the bigger applications the developers have very complicated fallback positions, so everything is kind of transparent but, as soon as you see the first proposal, you have to wonder—

CHAIR—What is really on their mind.

Prof. Spearritt—Yes. I was involved in a huge battle with Australand over the Abbotsford convent site, on the banks of the Yarra where Collingwood meets Kew, down from Mannix's old home.

CHAIR—You thought that Kew was being extended into Collingwood.

Prof. Spearritt—That is right. When any developer comes up with their first plan you have no idea whether they are really proposing to build 10-storeys or whatever it is or whether they are into some sort of complicated fallback thing. I do not know whether the state government planning regimes have encouraged that but it makes community consultation quite difficult because you do not know what anybody's bottom line is.

CHAIR—It was put to us, though, that land use planning has largely been a watered down, no-name brand, light-beer version of it and that a way forward would be far more rigour and specificity in ordinances and a more rigorous policy approach that says, 'These are the outcomes we want, these are the parameters against which we will measure them, and these are the performance requirements for the proposal.' It was put to us that in the true separation of powers an elected body will make those very clear articulations and then rack off and leave it to technocrats to see whether people come up with the nearest correct entry. That seemed to be at one end of the spectrum—trying to propose a solution to the same problem. Because we are in the middle, where we are neither fish nor fowl, nobody is happy. There is no certainty, clarity, transparency or clear understanding of where you get into that conversation. Have you had some thoughts about the other end of the spectrum—the engagement or the 'let's have a chat' option that you talked about?

Prof. Spearritt—In this matter my thoughts are largely practical. The single most effective intervention in urban planning in Australia in the past 50 years has been Sydney's centres policy. Successive state governments, whichever party was in power, pushed major centres like North Sydney, Chatswood, Parramatta and even Blacktown, Hurstville and so on. That has had enormous merit. You have had shopping centres, office development and quite a lot of medium- and even high-density development around places like Strathfield. In Sydney the public transport system has enormous political, commercial and corporate support because it is a key to the

lifeblood of the city, whereas it is not nearly to the same extent in Melbourne and certainly not here in Brisbane.

I think that was a bold policy. Sydney planners made the rail system a key to those centres—it is not unlike Homebush Bay, for that matter—and then you have had accretion since then. You have not had lots of subpolicies. Those centres have developed very effectively. I think that a bold initiative in the urban form with real infrastructure money behind it, whether it is Transurban, Macquarie Bank or the Commonwealth government—three competing infrastructure funds—can then have a lot of other spin-offs that you do not have to regulate or worry about.

CHAIR—Thank you, Professor. I appreciate you making the time available.

Prof. Spearritt—It was my pleasure.

[4.40 p.m.]

DAVIS, Ms Sheila Eileen, Campaign Coordinator and Member of Management Committee, Gecko-Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these proceedings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. On that bright and cheery note, are there any opening remarks or introductory comments you would like to make?

Ms Davis—With regard to that?

CHAIR—No, on your submission. That one is just a given.

Ms Davis—I did provide a supplementary submission today, having noted that the topic for today was the sustainability principles and frameworks. So I have added a bit to what I had said earlier. I would just like to direct you through it, if that is okay.

CHAIR—Sure.

Ms Davis—The first issue is sustainable populations. The first attachment is *The Seventeen Laws Relating to Sustainability* by Professor Albert Bartlett. He goes into great detail about sustainable levels of population. We have here in our city, on the Gold Coast in south-east Queensland, one of the highest rates of population growth. We are the most rapidly growing area and we are also an area of very high biodiversity. So there are major conflicts going on all of the time.

The other issue is the protection of that biodiversity. You will see that on the submission I have included a few pictures. They are not really clear, but I have a colour copy of the satellite image which shows basically the Gold Coast. It is on page 2 of your submission. You can see that the bottom part of our city or even half of our city is the scenic rim of the Mount Warning Tweed volcano. It is an area of extremely high biodiversity. We have a national park which is World Heritage listed and it is in three parts. So all of the area around that national park, although it is in private hands and is freehold land, should also be protected. We at Gecko spend a great deal of our time trying to protect those lands.

All levels of government have acknowledged this area as an area of extremely high biodiversity. The federal government, your department, named it as one of the top biodiversity hot spots. In the next photo down, which you cannot see very clearly, all of the dark bits are areas of high nature conservation significance as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency in Queensland. Those areas too are not protected. You can see the scenic rim area down on the bottom right of that photo. It is judged to be an area of state significance and it is full of rare and threatened species. All of these areas are under great risk due to not only urban settlement but also the need to provide for areas of recreation and areas of tourism to support

those people who live in those areas. So the protection of biodiversity is key. The next one is valuing ecological services. Also in the middle of that picture, you can see our Hinze Dam. All the area to the south of that is the catchment for that dam. That dam provides us with clean drinking water for the Gold Coast, yet there seems to be very little value placed on what that area provides to the human population that is settled along the coast.

CHAIR—So there is little restriction on activity in the watershed there.

Ms Davis—There is little restriction, yes—some restriction but not much. As a community group whose mission it is to protect the natural areas of the Gold Coast, we are constantly fighting to protect that area. On open and accountable government, the recent government elections here on the Gold Coast have presented us with quite a challenge. As you know, one of the key principles of sustainability is open and transparent governance—the local community having a say in what goes on. Over the last 10 years at least Gecko has been working with the Gold Coast City Council through its environment advisory committee and through all of the processes that they have put in place for community consultation, and we have been working with the government of Queensland under the south-east Queensland regional planning process SEQ 2021. I have provided you with a copy of my submission to that. It is the second attachment, which is quite extensive because it is full of all the attachments to that. That also says in more detail what I did not say in the submission.

One of the problems with open and accountable government is that the development lobby and the commercial lobby have not been exactly getting the rapid approval of their developments that they would like. For the recent local government elections there was a fund from the commercial interests which provided funding for all the candidates. I have provided you with a copies of some of the articles that relate to that, which show some of the key developers in the Gold Coast providing money for local government elections. We have now got a development dominated local council, and we fear that a lot of the policies and procedures that have been put in place over last 10 years will go by the wayside. Immediately after that set of newspaper articles, you will find a two-page submission which we put to the Premier last week about our concerns regarding this funding of our local government.

The final attachment is a paper, written recently by a doctoral student who is with the coastal CRC at Griffith University, on the ecological footprint of south-east Queensland. That relates to the fifth point in my submission: lowering our ecological footprint. The point of the submission in general is that we must lower both our consumption rates and our population growth rates in order to become sustainable. Anything can be justified, it seems, at local government level if you have to accommodate more and more people—not only accommodate them but also provide for all their other needs: their recreational needs and their employment needs et cetera.

CHAIR—Do you feel you have been fighting an ongoing battle for all of those 10 years, or do you sense a shift in attitudes that has supported the goals of your organisation?

Ms Davis—There was a point where we were very hopeful about the future of the Gold Coast. We had a wonderful CEO, Dr Doug Daines, who was an expert in local community involvement in planning—he was a lecturer at Sydney University. He was fired by our councillors because he was attempting to put limits on flood plain development and to have a sustainable city. So we have been working steadily with council since they fired him in 1998. Generally the voting was

7-7 but now it is more like 10-4. So we are very fearful about the future of our city and getting any implementation of the strategies that have been developed.

CHAIR—We heard earlier—I had the figures—about the area of reservation of land around the Gold Coast. Are those numbers not reflecting the biodiversity importance, or are they reflecting an absolutely minimalist level of protection?

Ms Davis—The only thing that is protected is Springbrook National Park. Ultimately, the national parks are the only things that are protected. Gold Coast City have had a strategy of buying open space over the last few years. However, these are still freehold properties and council can still allow multiple uses there—including camping, horse riding, four-wheel-driving and bikeways—that would conflict with biodiversity protection. We do not consider those areas to be protected. They can also sell off parts of those areas if they find that they are not of high biodiversity value.

Currently, the state government and local government are developing trail strategies throughout those regions, and we have had a very long and hard fight trying to do something about that. Attachment B of my submission to the SEQ 2021 project—which is probably the thickest of the attachments; it is 20 pages—includes a series of letters to the government about the need to protect those areas and not run trails all over the place. Because of the volcanic lava flows, this is a very steep and constrained landscape, with multiple waterways. We have many rare and threatened species in that area and we are constantly trying to get all levels of government to do something about it. Instead, they are running all these strategies to support the recreational and open-space needs of people in the same places where we would like to see the needs of wildlife supported and their habitats protected.

CHAIR—It was suggested to us that public engagement in SEQ 2021 was driven in part by an awareness that things cannot keep going forever in the way they are now. People started sensing some impact on their living standards or aspirations for their neighbourhood and the broader community that they are involved with. Is it your sense that there is a broadening of the conversation about these issues amongst the citizens of your region? It sounded to me like not much has changed—it is a battlefield and you are up for a blue on everything, because there is not an inculcation of those sustainability principles more generally and you are in there fighting to push them forward almost every step of the way. Is that a characterisation of it?

Ms Davis—That is correct. The SEQ 2021 project started in 1991 as SEQ2001—it was supposed to be a 10-year project. At that time, in 1991, we started talking to government, through that project, about sustainability. I remember a conversation with Terry Mackenroth in 1994. He is now the Treasurer and in charge of the new—

CHAIR—He chairs some part of the process.

Ms Davis—There is a new agency in Queensland, which was an election promise, of urban management and infrastructure provision. Terry Mackenroth, the Treasurer of Queensland, will be the head of that agency. Mr Mackenroth used to be the head of local government and planning, back in the early nineties under the Goss government. We often lobbied him for energy efficiency, water efficiency, more protection of open space et cetera, and he would say things like, ‘Oh, well, we have two houses that are energy efficient that the developers are looking at.’

It seems to be a totally developer driven state, region and, now, city. I spoke to Mr Mackenroth recently at a function at Parliament House. We had just heard that he had about $30 million—maybe it was more than that—for some infrastructure provision. I spoke to him, and I said, 'Are you going to be providing open space with some of that money?' and he said no. I said, 'Open space is one of the building blocks of sustainability. It is something that your government should be providing. It was part of the original regional framework for growth management,' and he said, 'Oh, yes, but that is not what this money is for.' The government have provided no money for open space since the ROSS, the Regional Open Space Scheme, went under in, I think, 1994. Its funding was cut because the land-holders did not want their land bought out from under them. They have stopped any funding of further open space, so it has been up to the local government to purchase open space with its own levy.

Mr JENKINS—Using the Gold Coast as a case study, what do you really think the federal government can do? What are the things that might best assist in countering the problems that you are confronting?

Ms Davis—The point may be more what the state government can do, but I know we are talking to the federal government. One thing is to provide protection and buffers to World Heritage areas and areas of high nature conservation value. At this point, the only thing we have to call on the government with is the EPBC Act and, as you know, there are only six or seven triggers under that act—

CHAIR—Seven.

Ms Davis—and so there are a lot of times when we cannot actually prove that this one particular thing that a developer might do is going to have a significant impact on the rare and threatened species in that area. Also, there is an issue about whether or not the EPBC Act can intervene in a planning matter if a local government plan, for example, is about to have a significant impact on a World Heritage area or an area of rare and threatened species. For example, we now have a Springbrook, which sits at the very south of our city; it is a small plateau. It is now developing a local area plan. Our local councillor is pro-development and has very little regard for or knowledge of the values of this area. He has got his lobby group, which will be pushing to have everything in that local area plan be code assessable, so no impact assessable development, so the rest of the community, the rest of the world—anyone who is concerned about that area—will not have a look-in; it will be decided amongst the councillors in council, with no requirement for any advertising.

As Professor Spearritt said earlier, we do not necessarily want to see everybody's back deck; but we do want to see if someone is putting in a development that is incompatible with the protection of water quality and the protection of the World Heritage values of that area. I would think that, if the federal government has identified these areas as areas of high nature conservation value or areas of high biodiversity, there should be some World Heritage protection. There does not seem to be. Unless the community is out there, calling upon the government under the EPBC Act—and, of course, you are very constrained under that act—we do not have any hope. Every level of government has acknowledged that this area is very important and very valuable.

The state government and local government had agreed to a joint planning process for the protection of those values in Springbrook, because we called upon them and said: 'Look, all of these activities are being planned in this area. We must have some coordinated process.' That was two years ago. Nothing has happened since. We, the community, have been sitting and waiting for this process to start and, in the meantime, the pro-development lobby have got themselves together and are pushing for decisions to be made outside that process. So, everywhere we look, we are not getting assistance, even with protecting areas of World Heritage value.

Ms GEORGE—You talk about a need at the national level for a means by which sensitive areas can be designated as such. How would you see that operating and what would you see as the criteria for the declaration of these areas?

Ms Davis—Queensland have been very active in developing a strategy, particularly here in south-east Queensland. Their original nature conservation strategy lists a number of criteria—I think there are about 13 to 15 criteria—which they have mapped, and that is what the map I have here is based on. This is a layered map of those 13 to 15 criteria, which includes areas where rare and threatened species have been seen, areas where there is a large remnant remaining and areas where the ecosystem is designated as endangered or of concern. They layer the GIS mapping and come up with areas considered of state, regional or local significance. I would think that the federal government would like to have an area of federal significance.

Ms GEORGE—On the issue of housing choice, you make the point that the pressures on the coastal strip will inevitably mean that it becomes an option only for high-income earners. You say that housing affordability and social disadvantage are really separate issues from that. Do you want to explain a bit more about what you had in mind?

Ms Davis—We just put in a submission to Gold Coast City's affordable housing strategy. I think the point is that no matter how much affordable housing you have, if your population is growing on an ongoing basis, you will always need more. There is some concern among the developers. A recent election campaign was run by a member of the Labor Party and, in the last article that appeared in the *Australian* this past weekend, he justified his involvement with big developers by saying he wants the average Aussie to be able to afford a house on the beach in the back blocks of Casuarina Beach or the Salt development on the Tweed coast. If you were to carry that to the extreme you would say, 'Why shouldn't they have an affordable house on the front blocks of Casuarina Beach?' It is just a nonsense. You cannot keep growing in population and continue to have affordable housing without destroying all the values in the area. There are limits to growth and the sooner the government actually acknowledges that there are limits to growth and does something about it the better off we will all be.

Ms GEORGE—So, in terms of the developments in the area, what plans are in place to ensure that there is some protection of those with little capacity to afford coastal living so that they are also a part of the social mix in future years?

Ms Davis—Council have a policy of integrated housing whereby they have various forms of housing in every development. Developers often do not like that; they want to have gated communities or whatever so they can have alternative sites. But we argue against having, say, trailer parks—what are they called? Sorry, I am American.

Ms GEORGE—Caravan parks?

Ms Davis—Yes, caravan parks—they isolate segments of the community in 'affordable housing'. We have some horrific examples of what happens when you isolate those people in certain areas. They do not have access to the services that normal housing provides and are ghettoised.

CHAIR—In your submission, you talk about a strong centres policy. We heard the previous speaker say that he thought it would work reasonably well in Sydney. Are you seeing that kind of thinking coming through in the SEQ 2021 work?

Ms Davis—I think so. The Gold Coast in particular has a very strong centres policy. However, whether or not those policies are adhered to is a problem. The Integrated Planning Act, which is of course the Queensland act, does not allow any prohibition on development and it requires local government to pay any land-holder whose rights are in any way taken away. Having to compensate developers, in light of current knowledge, for not allowing them to do something that was decided 30 years ago makes it virtually impossible for councils to do their forward planning and to not carry through the decisions they made in the past when they did not have that knowledge.

CHAIR—You do not have an urban property authority in Queensland that can assemble large parcels of appropriately zoned and suitable land for major commercial and economic activity. It is my understanding that you do not have a government agency that could bring that together, so you end up with spotty bits of activity because it is hard to bring together a number of parcels of land for a more rounded proposal that might be more responsive to sustainability principles.

Ms Davis—The provisions in the Integrated Planning Act which allow for local governments to require developers to pay for their own infrastructure if they are outside the benchmark development sequencing—

CHAIR—What is that?

Ms Davis—Benchmark development sequencing is basically where the local government decides: 'This is where the next bit of development is going to happen and we are going to provide infrastructure in that area. If a developer wants to put a development out here'—

CHAIR—If they want to leapfrog that.

Ms Davis—'they have to pay for the provision of that infrastructure.' Our council recently levied infrastructure charges, as they are allowed to do under the act. IPA came in in 1997, I think, and Gold Coast City started its new planning scheme in August last year. Part of that planning scheme is the development of infrastructure charges. The new policy would require about $14,000 per block. That is one of the reasons why the developers were up in arms recently, which led to their—

CHAIR—Campaign.

Ms Davis—participation in the local government elections. They wanted those charges reversed or at least reduced. When it comes to providing all that infrastructure, $14,000 is probably minimal.

CHAIR—Are you familiar with the UNESCO biosphere program?

Ms Davis—A little bit.

CHAIR—Down my way, we have an urban biosphere, one of the first in the world, where we are trying to recognise that humans are a species in the environment as well, and that it is not mutually inconsistent to try and find reasonable living standards and look after the ecology and social wellbeing of the community. One of the things we keep running into is how to provide economic and employment opportunities for the dormitory masses that want to come and sleep in our municipality but then nick off and go somewhere else chasing work. Is that becoming an issue that your organisation has put its mind to, whether it is SEQ 2021 or the centres policy or something like that—how to have those other aspects of community and people's lives and the city come forward in parallel with these waves of people just wanting to live here? Is that something you have put your minds to as part of your work and your advocacy when talking to people about avoiding becoming a commuter dormitory area?

Ms Davis—Gold Coast City has an economic development branch and we have been participating, as I said, through the environment advisory committee of Gold Coast City Council.

CHAIR—So your main way in is through that?

Ms Davis—Yes. We also pay attention whenever any policy is advertised and submissions are requested and try to respond. However, we would like to see a greater separation. I noted that your terms of reference talk about this issue of humans integrated with the environment. However, it is very difficult for wildlife to live among humans. We have an issue here in south-east Queensland with the koalas. We have been told by koala specialists that the koala on the Gold Coast is in danger. It is down to 10 per cent of its original numbers. If you look at a map of the Gold Coast the majority of the coastal plain has been cleared. That is where the koalas like to live.

CHAIR—That is their habitat.

Ms Davis—They do not like to live up in the mountains; they like to live in the rich soils that produce good eucalypt trees. We also know that, even if you provide a bit of your suburb as koala habitat, the road kills and the dog kills just eat away at them. Redlands, for example, has a couple of koala kills a day. My husband and I used to live in Redlands and he was the wildlife rescue officer. We were constantly coming across—

CHAIR—Called out for an accident.

Ms Davis—dog kills and road kills.

CHAIR—But do you have investors come into you saying, 'You guys know the neighbourhood—you know the area; you know the issues. Here is something we are thinking we

might like to do. What do you guys think? How can we find some common ground to move an idea forward?' Does that dialogue occur at all or is it all usually a bit combative and confrontationist when it pops up?

Ms Davis—No. There was a very good example of that recently with an ecovillage that has been planned for the Currumbin Valley area, which is where our office space is. We have been working closely with the developers on that ecovillage. However, I must say that that was a good outcome for an area that was already zoned as park/residential. We would not like to see those ecovillages spread throughout the rural area.

CHAIR—What is park/residential?

Ms Davis—Park/residential means that you can go down to 4,000 square metres or something like that.

CHAIR—Thank you for your submission. It is resolved by the committee that the material provided to us today by Ms Davis be authorised for publication.

Proceedings suspended from 5.13 p.m. to 5.26 p.m.

WILSON, Mr Geoffrey Eric, President, Urban Agriculture Network, Western Pacific

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these proceedings are formal proceedings of the House and therefore warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and it may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. On that bright and cheery note, are there some introductory remarks that you would like to make?

Mr Wilson—I would like to give you some background as to why I took an interest in urban agriculture. My profession is journalism. I have been an agribusiness journalist for 47 years since leaving agricultural college. I have been writing about the traditional mainstream industries—wool, meat, dairy, horticulture and grains—for 40 years. In the 1980s I went to China as a guest of the Chinese government and saw their policies for what they regarded as nutrient capture—nutrients being the things that plants need to grow, and we grow food plants and we feed plants to animals. The Chinese were looking at the very interesting concept that, over the 3,000 or 4,000 years of their recorded history, nutrients have gravitated from Manchuria down to the Yangtze and the Yellow River valleys. They wanted to stop the nutrients going from there into the Yellow Sea, which has been the logical progression.

CHAIR—Just moving through the soils?

Mr Wilson—Yes, and that is exactly what is happening here in Australia. Our farms are producing nutrients which come into the cities and go into the sea. Part of the problem is that the sea is being overloaded with nutrients. We hear about what is happening to the Barrier Reef in that regard. I became very interested in the nutrient flow that occurs from the farm to the city to the sea. The Chinese were looking at policies that they could adopt which would capture those nutrients within cities, use them within cities and recycle them. They were very low key in what they were doing but at least they had made a start on this. It was a very important philosophy, I believe, for their scientists to look at.

The next step I made was to take a self-funded tour of America. I won a scholarship to look at forestry. I started to observe what was happening in American agriculture—that is, the urbanisation of it. In the last census, some 10 per cent of America's food was produced within urban areas. That is not a big percentage on a world scale, because some cities of the world have 60 per cent of their food produced within urban boundaries. That triggered my interest in urban agriculture as a topic to follow as a journalist, which I did. I then became aware of an organisation called the Urban Agriculture Network Inc. in Washington DC. I discovered that they did not have anybody out here in the western Pacific, so I volunteered. There is me and a couple of others in the western Pacific doing that.

CHAIR—You are going to have to work on that bit of your story, Geoff. They sought you out to have a third of the globe covered by you.

Mr Wilson—Maybe. There are a few of us in key positions. We regard ourselves as a catalyst organisation where we have knowledge that we can then pass on in the right quarters to stimulate

interest. We have not got much in the way of funds, but we find that we can be very effective despite that. There are about a dozen things I could have made a submission on today. I chose urban rooftop microfarming, because that is a subject that I know a bit about and it is a subject where a lot is happening around the world. My supplementary submission expands upon my earlier submission, with pictures and a lot more information.

The point I make about urban rooftop microfarming, as I call it, is that it is capturing the nutrients in the city. Those nutrients are then held within the city. This is something that I observed in Canada, America, Europe, Asia and the mid East—not in a large-scale way at present but there are certainly some very interesting projects being undertaken. In New Zealand, I also saw a project which is described in my supplementary and original submissions. This project was the Silwood farm in Auckland, New Zealand. This rather interesting innovator had developed a farm in suburban Auckland on a suburban block of land of about 1,000 square metres, your typical quarter acre—

CHAIR—Delfin people just had a cow out the back.

Mr Wilson—He did a bit better than having a cow out the back. He had a hydroponic microfarm which, at the time I interviewed him, had a revenue of about $NZ415,000, employed seven people and serviced six supermarkets and about 30 restaurants within no more than five kilometres of him. That is typical good urban agriculture. It is certainly one of the highest-earning farms that I have ever visited. Production is around $NZ1,615 per square metre.

CHAIR—Why is this not happening more widely? Why isn't there that level of intensity and product quality to get into the supermarkets—and it is a bit of a race to the bottom to get those contracts?

Mr Wilson—It is starting to happen in hydroponics—hydroponics being the culture of plants in water in nutrient based solutions. It was happening there in a magnificent way because of this particular personality. He was geared to the high-tech things that he was doing, he was a pioneer and he was also a man who could keep a lot in his head. He used to be a traffic controller, so he had the right sort of temperament to really know what he was doing. However, there are others who are now doing that and one of the very important things, in terms of what I was saying earlier, is that these nutrients that we have in the city are organic nutrients. If we can develop organic hydroponics, it is a far better way of using those than the way they are used at present. At present, they go to landfill and in landfill they cause methane production. If you do not take it off and harvest it, it goes into the atmosphere and the greenhouse gas is 21 times worse than carbon dioxide. We have a vested interest in not sending organic matter to landfill, if we can utilise it elsewhere.

We can do that with vermiculture—worm farming. A group of investors and myself are developing a project in Mount Gravatt Central in Brisbane. It is a project where we take the food waste from local restaurants—some 12 local restaurants and cafes—sterilise it, put it through a worm farm, extract the organic nutrients and use those in organic hydroponics on a rooftop. The worm farm is in the basement of a building. My supplementary paper shows you the building that we have chosen. That will take 18 months to two years to get going properly. The aim of it will be to recycle those nutrients so that the produce grown organically hydroponically on the roof will go back to the same restaurants where we got the food waste from. We have worked it

out, using some guidance from the world's expert in organic hydroponics in New Zealand, that this can work very well indeed and be very viable as a business.

CHAIR—So you smack around the food waste, pulverise it and feed it to the worms. Do you take the worm secretions or the whole worm?

Mr Wilson—The process in the worm farm involves some additives as well because you cannot get the right mix—it is garbage in, garbage out.

CHAIR—Do you feed the worms to the plants or do they get to live another day?

Mr Wilson—No. There are three products from the vermiculture: one is the worms themselves—when they are surplus you feed them to fish; the second is the worm castings, which can be used for containerised growing of plants; the third is the worm liquor, which is extracted by water going through the worm farm itself.

CHAIR—It is like a leachate, almost, without the nasties?

Mr Wilson—Yes, that is exactly right. That is a good word for it. That is your hydroponic nutrient. It is usually broken down 10 to one and is used as a normal hydroponic nutrient. There are a few problems with it but, basically, it is pretty good. I have used it and done experimental work with it. That is the nutrient capture involved but there are a few other things that are important in all of this. One is that you are producing fresh produce where it is going to be sold. If you put it on a rooftop of a suburban shopping centre or nearby on a commercial rooftop, you have a very short distance for it to go back into either the restaurants or the retail outlets. This means that instead of transporting a lettuce, say, 1,000 kilometres, which happens in the supermarket system—40 per cent of the cost of that lettuce is in diesel transport, which is an imported fuel which has particulates in the air that cause cancer, asthma and a few other things—you have a local waste management process which is superior to what exists and you save on those transport costs.

You could say that farmers in those distant places are losing out. But I believe we have to consider this very seriously because, with prospective changes in climate and also any potential food terrorism, we will be required to look at other secure food-production alternatives.

CHAIR—What potential does what you are advocating have for meeting the broader food supply needs of the population of a city or a regional centre or something like that?

Mr Wilson—Its potential is vast because virtually every rooftop could be converted to produce food. Obviously that will be impractical and perhaps also uneconomic.

CHAIR—But in non-CBD areas, whether it is on a rooftop or in a vacant lot, you are not that fussed—as long as it is happening?

Mr Wilson—No, not at all; except there are not that many vacant lots in the city.

CHAIR—I appreciate that; I am just thinking about some of the regional centres and the like.

Mr Wilson—Yes. This is waste management that is creating fresh produce, a new food source and new employment within that community.

CHAIR—What is holding it up? What is standing in the way of this delicious possibility happening?

Mr Wilson—Probably lack of knowledge, and that is what we are about with this project at Mount Gravatt. We want to produce operational manuals so that people who are investors can see that this is a good thing to invest in. We did a feasibility study based on some Commonwealth government funding back in 1999. It came from the old—

CHAIR—RAP program?

Mr Wilson—Yes. That showed, on paper and using very conservative figuring, that after 17 months initial operation this would be a good business with an estimated 20 per cent return on the capital. That was just paper figuring, but we now want to have a pilot project which proves it.

Ms GEORGE—Is it happening anywhere in Australia? You have pointed to the New Zealand example.

Mr Wilson—No, not to my knowledge.

Ms GEORGE—So Mount Gravatt will be the first.

Mr Wilson—There are people who are interested in doing rooftop gardening—and in every city you can point to some rooftop gardening—as distinct from farming. But I know of nobody else in Australia.

CHAIR—What is the most useful thing we can do to help you? It seems as though you have the game covered but not everyone has caught on to the idea yet.

Mr Wilson—Yes. My supplementary paper has a recommendation that this committee might consider. It advises whoever is appropriate to advise that they should look at this subject and do some economic analyses of it on a broader scale.

CHAIR—So ANZFA and those guys are not giving you a hard time; there is no problem with feeding worm leachate to hydroponic buck choy or that sort of thing?

Mr Wilson—No. We have had very good encouragement from the Brisbane City Council. Councillor Kerry Rea's office is in the building that we have chosen and she has been our personal champion. Also the senior regulatory officer of the council is on our side.

CHAIR—So there are no regulatory impediments?

Mr Wilson—We have to go through the hoops of normal things in terms of planning; that is all.

CHAIR—'Boldly grow where none have grown before,' I see in your submission.

Mr Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—So you have done the initial work on the feasibility of the Mount Gravatt project?

Mr Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—Is the project you are involved with now scaling that up a bit, or is it just seeing whether the findings ring true?

Mr Wilson—At this stage we are collecting investment interest preparatory to doing the whole feasibility study again, so that we are quite assured of what we are about, and recruiting people to make it work.

CHAIR—You have had no hassle in getting organic certification for what you are doing?

Mr Wilson—We have not sought that. That is something for the future.

CHAIR—What about water consumption for productive yield and so on?

Mr Wilson—We will be harvesting it from the roof.

CHAIR—Is the consumption for the yield looking great?

Mr Wilson—Yes. Hydroponics uses about a 10th of the water of field crops, and so water is not our problem.

CHAIR—That is all going fine?

Mr Wilson—Yes.

CHAIR—So you are on the cusp of great things.

Mr Wilson—Yes. That is a good expression for it.

CHAIR—Are there any final thoughts you want to leave us with?

Mr Wilson—I would just draw your attention to all the other aspects of urban agriculture. It is a subject which does not rate very highly on people's radar in Australia.

CHAIR—You might be surprised to know that it has come up in a few of the submissions as being a way of connecting people with their food: people ask where lettuce comes from and they are told it comes from the supermarket, even though there is a bit more to it than that. It also came up earlier today as being a way to meet or connect with other people. It has been firmly advocated as a community gardening initiative that will help people—not only those who are less fortunate in having a nourishing food supply but generally to have some communally shared

activity with a shared purpose to bring them together. Perhaps my colleagues foresaw that this would happen, but it has hit me quite unexpectedly and has had quite a run actually.

Mr Wilson—There is a vast movement in America in that latter area of urban agriculture.

CHAIR—So this is Australia following after, is it?

Mr Wilson—Yes. One important thing—I will give you some supplementary information on this—is that a paper was given a few years ago in Texas at a conference on urban agriculture. Professor Roger Ulrich, who gave the paper, is an expert on the social aspects of urban agriculture. He looked at two things; but one thing that really came out in that seminar was that, if a hospital's intensive care ward faces out onto a nice garden, compared with, say, looking straight at a brick wall with no windows at all, the recovery rate of patients is 1½ to two days faster. That has huge implications for cost savings in hospitals.

CHAIR—Thank you. We appreciate all the time you have put into your submission. Good luck; what you are doing sounds pretty exciting.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms George**):

That the supplementary submission from Mr Wilson be received and published as evidence from today's hearings.

[5.48 p.m.]

BALL, Mr Robert Mervyn, Engineering Services Manager, Queensland, Delfin Lend Lease

BRUHN, Mr Carl Francis, Project Director, Varsity Lakes, Delfin Lend Lease

CHAPMAN, Mr Michael David, General Manager, Urban Design and Landscape, Delfin Lend Lease

GIBSON, Mr Guy Stuart, General Manager, Queensland, Delfin Lend Lease

THOMAS, Mrs Nerida Katherine, Urban Designer, Delfin Lend Lease

CHAIR—Welcome. Thanks for your submission and the turnout. Although you are not required to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Do you have any introductory remarks?

Mr Gibson—We first had contact with this inquiry last year when Rebecca Gordon contacted us with a view to obtaining information about some of our current projects in preparation for an intended tour of inspection of some of the current urban development projects in Queensland. We did provide some information at the time about various projects, including Varsity Lakes—which I understand the committee is visiting tomorrow—Springfield Lakes, Forest Lake and Twin Waters. They are the key projects we have under way in south-east Queensland. At the time, we did indicate that we had 20 projects running around the country. We are very happy to provide more detailed information about any of those projects and also to arrange site tours or inspections of any of those projects if that is something that the committee wishes to take up.

We lodged our submission because we believe we are well placed to assist the committee in its inquiry. Between Lend Lease and Delfin, we have individually as companies some 40 years of experience in developing urban communities. Delfin was acquired by Lend Lease about two years ago, and we have since created a new business unit, called Delfin Lend Lease, which combines the land development projects that were under way in the Delfin company at the time with the land development projects that Lend Lease had under way. So combined we actually have more corporate strength, experience, knowledge and enthusiasm to tackle some of these issues.

Amongst the projects that we have running around the country, some are widely regarded as leading edge. We have Newington, for instance, which is a joint venture with Mirvac in Sydney, which is the Olympic village. It is a whole suburb designed to very high standards of environmental performance. We also have Mawson Lakes in South Australia, which started life as the multifunction polis. It has quite significant environmental objectives as well as economic development objectives and social sustainability objectives built into the charter for the project.

Here in Queensland we have Varsity Lakes, which is also recognised as a leading edge project in the sense that it is an economic development project as well as an urban development project. So economic development and employment generation are as much a part of that project as providing opportunities for people to live is, for instance. It is one of the true live, learn, work, play, mixed-use projects.

Also in Delfin Lend Lease, we have a commitment to the three-legged stool model of ESD—that is, the social, economic and biophysical aspects of the environment. So everything that we do—from our initial assessments of sites, through master planning, design, construction activity, environmental management programs, the handover of completed assets, the community development work that we do with our resident and business communities and so forth—is aimed at addressing issues of sustainability across those three aspects of sustainability. That is also reflected in what we call the 'Delfin advantages', which we referred to in our submission. They are the eight aspects of our communities that really represent our brand values to our consumers, which all touch in some way on different aspects of sustainability.

We also have a commitment to research and continuous improvement. In that respect, we have a major strategic initiative under way in the company which is looking to benchmark the environmental performance of each of our current projects. We are doing some work to try to identify practical measures for monitoring the performance of our projects in relation to social, economic and biophysical aspects of environmental sustainability.

We also have some important relationships with other key organisations. In the past, for instance, we have developed relationships with CSIRO, the HIA, the Australian Greenhouse Office and a variety of universities to try to identify best practice and also new techniques for more sustainable urban development. In that regard, we have a major piece of research under way with the University of Queensland looking at social capital in newly developing areas. So we are doing some joint research with the University of Queensland at their Ipswich campus which is looking at ways in which developers like ourselves can more positively influence the creation of those sorts of ties of trust and reciprocity that go to encouraging strong social networks in new areas.

Our submission itself tried to deal fairly specifically with the committee's terms of reference. We also included in our submission details of some of the initiatives that we have under way at various of our projects around the country with a view to identifying the practical ways that we are addressing some of the issues that the committee's discussion paper canvassed in relation to, say, energy efficiency, water cycle management and so forth.

The key theme that we would like to emphasise is the importance in our view of the issues of scale and critical mass in dealing with some of these issues of sustainability, and the potentially significant role of master plan communities, such as the mixed-use integrated communities that we develop. In our view, those master plan communities do have the potential to break the cycle that we have at the moment of relatively fragmented, ad hoc, uncoordinated urban development in the outer suburbs of Australian cities. Because they are large scale, they can employ processes of comprehensive planning and coordinated development which enable those projects to better address the key issues for environmental sustainability—which in our view have to do with habitat protection, water cycle management, achieving a better balance between public and private transport use, developing functional and self-reliant communities in a social sense and

also job generation and economic development. So that is the key theme I guess that we explored in our submission, along with the detail of the environmental initiatives that we have under way at various of our projects. I do not know whether anyone else would like to make some additional introductory remarks, but we are very happy to answer questions that might have arisen from your reading of our submission.

CHAIR—Does anyone else want to add anything? If not, I will go to questions. The scale thing has come up a lot. There is triple piping of plumbing, recovery of stormwater and the use of the ubiquitous lakes that are very attractive at the moment. As I understand it, you assemble the parcels yourselves, with the exception of one VicUrban project in Melbourne where you partnered with VicUrban because there were some public housing outcomes or some other reasons.

Mr Gibson—We have had a variety of models around the country. Our preference traditionally has been to partner long term with landowners who wish to retain ownership through the development process.

CHAIR—So you come up with a shares structure, where you put in the expertise and the pain and they cough up some real estate?

Mr Gibson—Effectively, we contribute the development and management expertise. We take all of the development risk, if you like, in the sense of contributing all of the equity that is required to undertake the development, subdivide the land, provide the facilities, do all the infrastructure works and so forth. The landowner remains the owner right through that development process until the sale to an end consumer, at which time that crystallises a payment to the landowner. They effectively progressively reduce their ownership from the entire site to nil at the end. That is one pure form of that formula. But we have had every other formula up to and including us going to outright purchase of some sites in order to get control of the land for the development.

CHAIR—It has been put to us that that is a real obstacle—we get patchwork quilt land ownership patterns and we end up with runty little four-lot subdivisions with a swale drain as its main feature, when there are so many other possibilities there. There are the institutional arrangements about outlying development planning at a statutory level moving into the detailed development proposals that you are talking about—master plan communities and the like. Is it your sense that there is a lack of will? The tools seem to be there; there does not seem to be any missing piece. There is enough adaptiveness amongst you guys to work it out anyway. I guess my question is: is that a debate taking us nowhere in particular?

Mr Gibson—Each state has addressed this in a slightly different way. Queensland is unique, I think, in not having a government land agency. We have no government agency that has the mandate to go out and assemble the land parcels and then make them available for more coordinated forms of urban development. So Queensland has tended to rely more heavily on the market in the sense of developers effectively having to do what you said—

CHAIR—So the service and expertise—

Mr Gibson—and put together parcels. The end result of that is that most development occurs by way of that ad hoc, small scale, fragmented, uncoordinated process which results in poor social, economic and biophysical outcomes.

CHAIR—I do not know whether it is a triumph of marketing over cynicism, but I actually believe you—and that worries me a bit after eight years in public life—because you have a good brand. There seems to be an impression that you do your leg work and you do not cut corners. Whether or not you optimise outcomes on all of these Delfin advantage areas, you actually have a go. I pay tribute to you guys for that. It is an encouraging thing. Why is it so hard to get some within your industry to even have a go at half of these things? You guys would not be doing this as a philanthropic exercise—there are obviously zacks in it at the end of the day. Why is it so hard?

Mr Gibson—It is very capital intensive. It is fair to say that there are very few organisations that can leverage off their balance sheet to the extent that we can. Many of our long-term projects, which may last 20, 25 or 30 years, do not actually go cash positive until halfway through their lives.

CHAIR—So you can carry those?

Mr Gibson—That is right—we are carrying those. They are a drag on the overall return on the investment of the company's funds during a time in which, effectively, money is going out by way of infrastructure investment and so forth and it is only slowly coming back by way of sales to potential end users. As I said, for a 25-year project it might be an eight- to 10-year payback period, if you like, at which time it is then cash positive.

CHAIR—So this is almost internally reinforcing in that you are around so long that you cannot cut and run. If you make a hash of it you are going to be hearing about it for a whole bunch of years afterward.

Mr Ball—Yes. An ongoing issue, certainly with local authorities, is getting them to understand that we are here for eight, 10, 12 or 15 years. When we go back trying to get approvals for various things, you get treated as though you have 50 lots down the road, you are going to do it and then take off and they will not see you for dust in 12 months time. So it is one of those things that people do not really get a good perception or understanding of, particularly at the tech officer level at a lot of the local authorities. They just cannot seem to get their heads around it.

Mr Gibson—There are almost diseconomies of scale at an approval level, if you like, for very large projects. Given that there is a fairly widespread acknowledgment that these sorts of large scale projects do result in better outcomes, you would think that the systems would be set up to facilitate and encourage those kinds of projects. But, in fact, in a way the systems are really set up to encourage and facilitate the smaller scale, single-use residential projects rather than the large scale, complex, mixed-use, integrated projects like ours.

CHAIR—You would stand as an open file for years even though there might be quite substantial progress—they can hardly pack you up and move you on because things are going on.

Ms GEORGE—In terms of some of the suggestions that you have made about things that might be done at the Commonwealth level in point 5 towards the end of your submission, can you just elaborate a bit on the proposed reform of infrastructure charging and institutional arrangements? You make reference to it, but I do not think that you expand anywhere in the submission on just exactly what you have in mind.

Mr Gibson—Just as a practical example—and Rob can elaborate on this—one of the key issues is water cycle management. At the moment the water cycle is not managed in an integrated fashion. We often have different agencies responsible for water supply. That might mean that different agencies are involved in water treatment and headworks areas, water reticulation or water retailing, sewage treatment, storm water management and water quality management in downstream and receiving waters and so forth. It is difficult to align all of those agencies to pursue common objectives that might be for the overall public good or environmental benefit. We have had situations where water authorities are more interested in increasing the volume of water sales, whereas our interests are in reducing potable water demand and looking for trade-offs between water and sewerage, for instance, that might not be available because of the strict silo approaches of different agencies.

Mr Chapman—It has a lot to do with the competition, hasn't it?

Mr Ball—Yes.

CHAIR—So you would consider package treatment options, potentially receive wholesale volumes of water from the retailer and manage that through your own internal rating—almost a glorified body corporate arrangement with your lot holders.

Mr Gibson—That is right.

CHAIR—You would reticulate the treated water around the subdivision for ornamental water features, gardening and the like, and then whatever is left would shoot back into the network and you would pay on that volume. Is that what would happen?

Mr Ball—In a broad sense.

Mr Gibson—At the moment we are looking at a large satellite town proposal south of Brisbane. Because it is sitting outside a current council headworks area for water supply and sewerage, for the first time ever we have the opportunity to push the envelope on some of these sorts of techniques. We are looking at a totally integrated approach to water cycle management that could see potable water use reduce by potentially 75 or 80 per cent because we will be managing the entire water cycle system. We will have triple reticulation, so we will potentially be importing treated effluent to make up the community's irrigation needs, for instance. We can manage the entire water cycle system to reduce potable water demands and to make sure that water is reused on site, that treated effluent is reused on site for irrigation purposes or whatever and that whatever water is ultimately discharged into receiving waters meets water quality objectives as well.

CHAIR—Coming back to Jennie's question, what needs to be done to make that easier? Where are the feds being unhelpful, whether it is depreciation regimes, infrastructure or whatever? What helpful role can we play in that?

Mr Gibson—I have only very recently become aware of a suggestion made by the Planning Institute of Australia—in fact it was since the submission was lodged. I am not sure whether they have formally made the suggestion to the committee. It involves effectively setting up a national competition policy fund to encourage better alignment of development and environmental objectives by states and, potentially, by local governments as well, so that there would be an incentive, or disincentives on the contrary side, for local authorities to make sure that they have not misaligned infrastructure provision and pricing policies, for instance, in terms of environmental outcomes. That seems to have potential.

Ms GEORGE—What consideration do you get from local government authorities when you negotiate the development of one of these large-scale master-plan communities? Do they treat you as they would treat any small-scale developer or do you get concessions—

Mr Ball—On occasions, yes, particularly where we have a project site which is either within or abutting an existing urban area, because they obviously will have a regional infrastructure system set up for their water, sewerage et cetera and they will have set up their whole funding mechanism based on a particular area requiring a certain amount. It is very hard to convince them that what we are going to do in that area will reduce demand there quite significantly, because all they can see is that that reduction is then going to reduce the amount that they can charge us to recoup, even though in practice we are not using that amount of amenity. The fact is that they have external infrastructure which they already have in place or are using. Some of those generated costs will need a fund. If you come in with something which is different from the ordinary, it is usually initially treated fairly negatively. The big advantage, as Guy mentioned before, is that the project is isolated and it does not have any constraints. Consequently we are getting very positive support from the local authority, because we are solving a major problem.

CHAIR—Because there is no other agenda?

Mr Ball—Absolutely.

Mr Gibson—We have had a program running at Forest Lake for the last 12 or so years and we have established a credible track record with Brisbane City Council, which has recently been collaborating with us in the development of our last village at Forest Lake, Sanctuary Pocket. It is going to contain over 400 dwellings, all of which will have rainwater tanks and solar hot water systems, which we are providing through an incentive package, and council is supporting that incentive package. That is a good example where an enlightened council is working with a developer to promote better environmental outcomes. That has been possible because we have had 12 years of partnership with the council.

Ms GEORGE—Are you getting a reasonable social mix in these developments you are involved in?

Mr Gibson—There is a happy coincidence between our commercial outcomes and getting good social outcomes in that one of the things we do to drive sales volumes is try to appeal to as

many submarkets as we can at one time. Delfin pioneered a very broad housing mix in new suburban areas. Instead of being a monoculture of 600 square metre to 800 square metre lots, as many developers offer, we provide lots from 250 square metres up to 1,000 square metres. Our average might be—

Mr Chapman—Depending on where we are, it is between 400 square metres and 500 square metres.

Mr Gibson—A lot of different types of housing and different lot sizes are available. That means we can access different housing submarkets. We get young couples who are about to enter into family formation, older families with teenage children, empty nesters and a lot of single people. About 10 per cent of our sales go to single people, and 60 per cent of those are women. So we get a very broad housing mix, a very broad age mix and a very broad social mix, all as a happy by-product of our desire to drive sales volumes as fast as we can to create the surplus that is available for things like landscape development, lakes, parks, playgrounds, community facilities and so forth. It also means we do not get those sharp peaks in age specific infrastructure, which then helps people like education authorities, because they do not then need to provide a lot of surplus capacity to cater for peak demands in, say, primary school, which is then followed by a bulge in high school and then by empty space at primary and high schools. It means we get a much more normal age distribution. It is still weighted somewhat towards young families, but it is a much more normal age distribution compared with typical outer suburban areas.

CHAIR—Your submission gives a whole host of examples of where you have protected the natural environment and biodiversity, and of your involvement in water. Is there a great problem when these things are handed over to whoever is going to be responsible for them after you?

Mr Chapman—It depends. At the start of a process we always try to work out what is going to come under council management and what is not. At the end of the day, almost all the public domain belongs with the council, with the council being the primary maintainer of that space, rather than the state or any local association. With careful negotiation up front there is normally not a problem, but the more natural the area the harder it is to keep it intact in its natural state, given the pressures that putting a whole lot of people around the area are likely to impose on it. Even in the natural areas, we do what is called establishment maintenance, and then we tailor our maintenance back to a level which is sustainable by the local authority, so that there is a seamless approach. But, yes, we do work with a number of local authorities where the expectation of what is a fair and reasonable level of maintenance to be done in the public realm is probably less than what either our community or even the outside community perceives as reasonable.

Mr JENKINS—Have there been any cases where a special rate has been struck because there are additional imposts?

Mr Chapman—We have made many attempts over lots of years to get special rates struck. We think they are a great solution. In all the circumstances that I am aware of, across our projects in Australia, we are yet to strike a special rate.

Mr JENKINS—This would not be an impediment to your marketing?

Mr Chapman—No. We do not believe it would be an impediment to our marketing. I should point out that in the current project that Guy was just referring to, which is just south of Brisbane, a satellite project, the council involved has agreed that we can take the town that we are designing, understand its real costs—the maintenance costs, the provision of facilities or whatever else we believe that city needs to be a sustainable city—and build that into a rating mechanism, including some revenue mechanisms, so that the city pays for itself through its rating system. Would that be an impediment to our marketing? We are yet to be able to test it, and that is part of the problem.

Mr JENKINS—The submission touches upon this, but what about provision of social infrastructure? I am also interested in your thoughts about to what degree as a developer you can get involved in second-guessing the way that the people who are going to move in might relate to each other. Could you go over that aspect of the sustainable community?

Mr Gibson—That is one of the reasons why we are doing this joint research with the University of Queensland on social capital in new areas, but I guess our approach to community development has involved a number of dimensions. One is urban design—so the work that people like Michael and Nerida are involved in on a day-to-day basis. This takes in the ways in which you can design a neighbourhood to give people a sense of connection to their local area—a strong sense of identity and place. Much of what we do is all about place-making to create a strong address that people feel attachment to. Then there is the work that we do to ensure the timely provision of normal basic community facilities—typically child care, education, local community centres and so forth. If we do not provide them directly ourselves, we coordinate with government and non-government agencies to ensure the provision of those kinds of facilities when the community needs them rather than with a long timelag involved.

There is also the work we do as residents move in, which is more in the software realm than the hardware realm. So we generally have community liaison officers who welcome people to a new community and provide them with information kits about local council services—where the local churches are, what sprinkler times might apply and the local clubs that exist. Then there is the work that we do to establish local networks through facilitating the establishment of sporting and cultural associations of various kinds and Neighbourhood Watch—those kinds of things. There are also a whole series of activities, events and programs that we run which again are all aimed at encouraging networking and social interaction amongst our residents. That might include things like movie nights in the park, carol nights at Christmas, meet your neighbours events when people first move into the community and so forth. So there is a fairly wide range of things that we do right from the early design work all the way through to when people are moving in to encourage more socially sustainable outcomes in communities.

A lot of what we do is the sort of thing that local community development workers do in local government. Their resources are stretched pretty thin, so what we do is provide a very high level of community development work for our communities. One of the things that we are exploring with the University of Queensland with their social capital researchers is the extent to which some of the techniques we are using are more effective than others and what other techniques we could be using to promote social interaction and a strong sense of connection to communities and so forth. That work will play out over a two- or three-year period.

Mr JENKINS—I realise that by going to Varsity Lakes tomorrow we might get an answer to this, but what are the keys to internalising some of the economic opportunities within the development? This is going beyond just a retail centre—the theory is that perhaps we should be doing things to try to give people job opportunities either at home or close to home.

Mr Gibson—Carl is project director for Varsity Lakes, so he will be presenting to you tomorrow quite specifically on business development—

CHAIR—We will take notes, Carl, and see if you say the same thing tomorrow!

Mr Bruhn—We are doing a range of things at Varsity that I think encourage that sort of activity. One is that we have reached an agreement with council whereby home occupation or home business is under the planning scheme for the whole of Varsity Lakes. So that is one option. The other thing, which we can show you tomorrow, is that we are reinvigorating or renewing the concept of what at the moment we are badging as SOHO or shop-top housing. This is providing an opportunity for commercial or retail type activity at street level with residential accommodation above it. The other interesting thing—and it is probably not unique to the Gold Coast, particularly the more we look at this across the country—is the work we have started to do with economic development and business. There is a huge desire and need for office space, particularly for SMEs, which are very prominent throughout the country, and it is providing affordable—

Ms GEORGE—So it is like a collective facility that small companies can plug into—someone to answer their phones or whatever.

Mr Bruhn—That is one option. They will not necessarily be able to pay for a boardroom or meeting rooms, but they will be able to have shared facilities. It is trying to work out a structure that will enable that sort of cohabitation from a business point of view. The other is that their space needs are far less than in the typical commercial environment. We have needs for people that are 30 to 60 square metres as opposed to 600 to 1,000 square metres—and there is a real diversity in that need as well. The other interesting point is that quite often these businesses want to buy rather than lease, which I think probably rolls back into their own financial stability.

CHAIR—DIY super schemes.

Mr Bruhn—And super schemes as well. I think it is a good opportunity for some small business to do that, because there is growth potential as well instead of owning your own facilities. Again, we are getting a lot more strata title type commercial space rather than the traditional building that is leased.

Mr JENKINS—What is your definition of wired communities? What are you actually offering?

Mr Bruhn—That is a very interesting one. I presented to the inquiry into competitive broadband earlier in the year, and there was a whole raft of discussion about what is broadband and what is wired. At Varsity Lakes there has been a lot of discussion about the availability broadband. Firstly, I will clarify what I think broadband is and what it is not. Telstra operate and offer a service which they call broadband, which is otherwise known as ADSL. ADSL is very

limited in what it can provide, particularly in the commercial arena. I will also clarify that point by saying that most new developments—it is not just Delfin—until very recently have not been able to have ADSL.

Ms GEORGE—That is right.

Mr Bruhn—That is now being addressed and the new systems are slowly being implemented. True broadband is a fibre optic cable. At Varsity, for example, we had a broadband fibre optic cable that was put in place as part of the Pacific Innovation Corridor—PIC. It was an initiative with some government involvement, and Boeing and PowerTel ran fibre optic from Brisbane back down to the Gold Coast, and it terminates at Varsity Lakes. It was a fantastic thing: we had the best broadband available in the country, but you could not access it because it became a very commercial decision from the end user's point of view. You had to pay somewhere between $50,000 and $100,000 to get the black box that could talk to your computers as well as run the fibre link back to your building. There are a lot of providers out there who say they can provide broadband, but again it comes back to a commercial situation. When you are working probably in a greenfield situation, it is very difficult because you do not have the demand upfront. So you have to roll it out incrementally, but it still means someone has to pay the capital cost of the infrastructure upfront to build upon the network.

One of the solutions we had at Varsity Lakes was a developer who put up a set of apartments that have true broadband capability. He formulated his own communications company as a result of it. Together with him, we actually reticulated the business area with broadband so that anyone who came on site and built a building or established an office in an existing building now have access to broadband at their front door. Again, we actually contributed towards the capital cost of laying that broadband to get the project to work. That was a very long answer.

Mr JENKINS—Thank you for the answer. On these opportunities for economic development in offices and businesses et cetera, often I hear that, whilst this is all good in theory, the market will not bear it. The point is that you have concrete examples where you have the local government authority on side and you are doing it. I take it that there is interest in the market.

Mr Bruhn—From the commercial market, it is almost becoming a necessity that it is available. I guess we have brought the connection costs down—though it is a factor of time and technology as well—from about $100,000 a building down to probably about $2,500 a tenancy, which is a significant difference. For most tenants and businesses these days, irrespective of whether they are IT based or not, because of the transfer of data electronically, it has almost become accepted that when you move into a tenancy there is some broadband capability.

CHAIR—Of the principles, 'business prosperity' was the Delfin advantage I was most curious about—the capacity of Delfin or any other integrated property group to deliver on that when so many of the variables are outside your control. The ones that you are talking about are characterised as being fairly footloose; there is not a great locational buy-in, and the convenience is probably fairly attractive. But, beyond that, what kind of interaction do you have with the councils or, as we have heard today, the regional structures—whatever they look like—to formulate genuine sustainable robust economic opportunities to get past the concept of sprawl as being just about housing, and seeing human settlement as not just the dormitory stuff but education, employment, education, social engagement and spiritual escape to bushland or

something like that? Clearly, you guys cannot nail that on your own. Are the other players interested in talking to you about those things, so that you are not seen as a room for hire for a start-up incubator for microbusinesses that will say, 'We are done on that advantage, so let's tick that box and move on to urban form or something that is more directly in our control'?

Mr Bruhn—I will give you what is probably a longwinded answer to that in a number of segments. Firstly, it comes back to the planning that we do at the very front of the project with our urban designers, particularly in looking at what the place will or will not be in the future. One of the things that we have recognised is that we need to demonstrate, for example with Varsity tomorrow, that it is a very mixed use environment—that it is a mixture of commercial, retail and residential, which itself creates a very urban place, which gives it a certain amount of viability and ultimately some degree of sustainability. That is one factor. The support we get, again using Varsity as an example, from Gold Coast City Council in particular has been tremendous, but as a local authority they can only go so far. They have a very strong economic development unit which support us in any way they can, but that is not via any contribution or reduction in headworks or—

CHAIR—Let me give you an example. The Gold Coast is pushing health tourism: come to Australia for world-class medical services, have your operation, your plastic surgery or whatever—recuperate in our space, as well as buy our medical expertise. Do they come and say to you: 'We need a dedicated private oncology hospital. Stick that in your master plan'?

Mr Bruhn—There is a degree of consultation, but we recognise that they cannot be selective towards one particular developer.

Ms GEORGE—Certainly not!

Mr Bruhn—There is a degree of consultation, and I know it occurs across a number of developments. They do look at bringing business opportunities to us, as I know they do with—

CHAIR—They tell you who is interested in things, and then it is up to you do decide whether you want to put the land parcel together to support that?

Mr Bruhn—Or, quite often, as I think the Gold Coast is doing with you tomorrow, they may give you an overview of the whole city. Varsity Lakes will perhaps be one stop on that tour to let people know what is on offer. The legwork is then done by us. We did a very similar thing with the Queensland government through a group we established of business parks in south-east Queensland. A number of business parks were going to the state government saying, 'Feed us with inquiries; direct your inquiries to us,' which they cannot do. So we went back to them as a consortium of eight or nine business parks between the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, saying, 'We as a group want to put together some material together for you to use.' One of their issues is that they can bring the service inquiry to government level but they cannot actually take someone to a site-specific solution. Through the business park network they now can and it is fair and equitable.

CHAIR—What about taking the idea further? Let me unkindly characterise so many of the submissions that we have as saying, 'A great role that the Commonwealth can play is to give us cash and the world will truly be a finer place.' People have put a lot of thought into how to say

that in a million different ways. At the heart of it, five or six of your eight bullet points are essentially about cash—those about infrastructure, facilities, someone to cough up money for affordable housing, local government charges are killing you and infrastructure charges are unhelpful, just to name a few. How do you see that actually working in reality? You might have a proposal or a project and you have a transport corridor there. Is there just too much going on in south-east Queensland for you guys to say, 'We can invest our money in a whole bunch of places, but if you want us to invest here, you guys need to at least run the Robina rail line another couple of stations down our way.' Do you have that kind of leverage or those kinds of conversations?

Mr Bruhn—No.

Mr Gibson—Not really, even at the scale of project that we undertake.

CHAIR—Carl was very indecisive about that!

Mr Gibson—They generally probably fall just below the radar scope of regional planning exercises. Even with all of the employment generation potential of Varsity, it does not rate as a centre on any of regional planning frameworks. It would rate on the Gold Coast planning scheme as a centre, but not on a regional framework for growth management.

Mr Bruhn—It does, but it still does not bring us any direct benefit from a government level.

CHAIR—So for transport infrastructure you have to schmooze with the local bus companies or put in independent active options like pathways and things like that?

Mr Gibson—Or we provide buses ourselves.

Mr Ball—Or we subsidise public transport until such time that there is a critical mass there so that they can justify it under their regulations.

CHAIR—And you enter into a discussion with the state transit people or the retail provider of the bus service about the point at which you no longer underwrite the bus service and you are out?

Mr Gibson—Effectively.

Mr Ball—Essentially, yes.

CHAIR—And you use proceeds from your sale to bring forward those kinds of things that would ordinarily happen—you want to avoid that horrendous gap between when humans arrive and all of the rest of the social fabric is knitted around them, so you bring all of that in?

Mr Ball—It is creating a mindset as well. One of the things that has come out very strongly is that, if people do not have a public transport service when they move into a place, they will use their car. They will get into that habit and they will not break it, no matter what you do. But, if we can provide that infrastructure in some form initially, they will develop those habits early. Then, once the full scale infrastructure comes into place, they are already in that mindset. It is

not then a hard transition to encourage them to keep using it or to use it even more. If they have been used to using the car to go here, there and everywhere for two or three years before a bus service has turned up, it becomes very hard to get them out of the convenience et cetera of having the vehicle and then going back to using the bus.

CHAIR—How far does your commitment to these things extend? My understanding is that you will sell a house and land package; you will not necessarily build it yourself—you have accredited builders that you collaborate with.

Mr Gibson—We normally sell vacant lots. We subdivide and sell land, largely. We do some built form ourselves—apartments, townhouses and so forth—but very largely the business is selling vacant land to either builders or consumers directly.

CHAIR—So how do you know that the improvement on your hopefully more sustainable subdivision walks the talk that you guys do? We have been to some places where there has been a lot of effort on the urban planning side of it and it looked fantastic, then wall-to-wall McMansions have gone up—these Tuscan, ugly things that do not really look terribly appropriate anywhere other than Tuscany. It just seemed like all of that good preparation amounted to nothing. We keep hearing that it is because people build what the market wants and there is not the appetite amongst consumers to actually carry forward the kind of commitment to sustainability that you might be aspiring to when you are subdividing. How do you—

Mr Gibson—Physical environments are basically enabling or restrictive. What we try to do with our physical environments through our design is to make them as enabling as we can of good environmental behaviour. I think we make the point in the submission too that, to agree with you, all of that good work can be eroded very quickly by the behaviour of a household at an individual level. There are enormous gains still to be made in potable water-use reduction, energy-use reduction and waste generation all at the level of individual households, which is why we are promoting more strongly things like rainwater tanks and solar hot water in houses in the projects that we are doing.

CHAIR—Let us take it a bit further and talk about your new satellite city where you are arguably going to be the local authority—

Mr Ball—To a degree.

CHAIR—Let us say that you are going to be the head body corporate guys who are going to set out a pricing strategy that, for the first time, would actually enable all the price signals to be put in place to back up these things. So, if you want to go berserk and burn up electricity, once you hit that rate we will bill you at that rate. If you want to have a poor ecologically performing house, we will reflect that in the rate. If you want to use this potable water, we will charge potable water at its cost and you can turn your back on the grey water that is available. How are you devising your own strategy to try and encourage the behaviour you are seeking to implement?

Mr Chapman—I will take one step back. You mentioned McMansions before, which has a lot to do with the energy, waste and everything else. Down in Sydney at a couple of our estates that we are covenanting at this point in time, and we obviously covenant everywhere, we are

covenanting size—not up, but down—in an attempt to reduce housing size and bring it down. In addition to that, we are using setbacks within blocks. Currently, when you buy a block of land in most estates, you can build on about 75 per cent of it. When you buy a block of land down in Nelsons Ridge, which is a project just west of Parramatta, you can only build on about 55 to 60 per cent of it.

CHAIR—That is this plot ratio that you have?

Mr Chapman—Yes. The plot ratios have been reduced, and then there is an additional reduction within the covenant to control the amount of built form.

CHAIR—So are eaves making a comeback?

Ms GEORGE—Not to my knowledge.

Mr Chapman—In different places we are enforcing eaves as an alternative to particular outcomes. Rather than tell people that they must put eaves in, in village 5 at Springfield—which I think is called the Promenade—if they do not put eaves in, they have to use another set of measures to try and get better efficiency on these houses. There is a whole series of measures through the covenants to try and force people into a more environmentally responsible approach. We cannot do much about things like how much electricity they use, even when we are our own city, because it still concerns a supplier that comes outside of our control, whereas with water, we will have some way to work with the local water people to entice people to use more of their own recycled water—that is, through their stormwater tanks on site—and our recycled water that is delivered back to their yards.

CHAIR—If that is going to work—you have those covenants in place and the market is not going berserk over there—what is the argument that says that that kind of performance requirement should not be in the building regulations and a normal part of development approvals around the country? You guys are not doing this for fun; you are making some cash. We heard from the HIA—and what an unfortunate experience that turned out to be—who said, 'We're there as long as we don't have to lead it. If the consumer wants something more thoughtful, we will give it to them. But don't push us around to build more sustainable housing.' It was really a bit demotivating. What is going on?

Mr Bruhn—A lot of it comes back to consumer education and getting them to understand the benefits of not following the trend of the Tuscan house or whatever.

CHAIR—How are you going to do that? Are you going to give them an estimated cost of running their home?

Mr Ball—As part of that education, certainly. For example, part of the promotion that we are doing for the last 400 lots at Forest Lake—the development is called Sanctuary Pocket—is what we call the naturally green scheme. It gives people some feedback on various things they can do for energy and water efficiency and has all sorts of information like, 'By doing this you will save the equivalent of 100,000 swimming pools of water every year,' and those sorts of things.

CHAIR—So saying things like, 'Don't use buffalo grass for your lawn; you will never keep it green. Try these things'?

Mr Ball—Yes, saying things like, 'Try these types of grass because they use less water and you only have to mow once a month instead of once a week.'

CHAIR—Or saying, 'These plant species are indigenous to the area, and the birds might come visiting you.'

Mr Ball—Yes; that is all part and parcel of it. We have also just subsidised 50 of our builders to go through the Queensland government's Greensmart building scheme, which is an education in green building, essentially.

CHAIR—When they go to New South Wales it is BASIX and when they go to Victoria it is different again. Is that an issue?

Mr Ball—Consistency across the board is certainly an issue.

Mr Chapman—It would be better if it was consistent, but at the moment Greensmart is the best program we have access to in Queensland. If you have access to BASIX or a modified version of BASIX, you might as well use it, but Greensmart is the best one in Queensland at this time.

Mr Ball—We are not doing it just yet, but we will get to the point when we will say to our purchasers—and we may well put it in part of the covenant—that unless they have a Greensmart accreditation we cannot use them. That is a bit restrictive, but it is certainly the sort of thing we would like to head towards.

Mr Bruhn—One other subtle way that we try to educate the market is through builders. We often spend a lot of time educating builders about good design practice. We probably do not do it as much as we used to, but when we first went into the Townsville market eight or ten years ago, for example, Townsville housing was pretty woeful. Probably over the course of two years we undertook a series of processes to educate builders and architects about good home design principles. Following on from that, we have our own national builder awards. That is becoming very competitive amongst the builders that work within Delfin projects as well.

CHAIR—Thank you. If overnight you are reflecting on our conversation and you have some other thoughts, talk to us about them tomorrow. We are getting feedback from people about what we could do that is most helpful without standing in the road of people who are doing worthwhile things anyway.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms George**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 6.43 p.m.