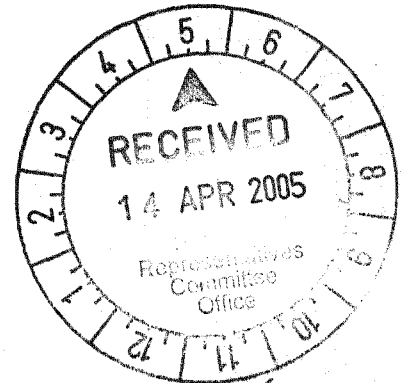




CONSERVATION COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.

11 April 2005

Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Madam/Sir

Jana Drew
Inquiry Secretary
9/5/05

Sustainable Cities Inquiry

The Conservation Council of WA appreciated the opportunity to appear before the Committee last week.

In discussion at the hearing Committee Members raised a number of questions. We would like to supplement our submission and responses given at the hearing with the following comments.

Building standards and energy efficiency

Shortcomings of recent changes to the Building Code of Australia and residential planning codes in WA are discussed by architect Garry Baverstock in his paper at www.solartec.iinet.net.au/satellite/architecture/BCAregulations1.htm. As well as more stringent energy efficiency requirements in building standards, it is important that planning codes promote energy efficient subdivision design.

Green procurement

The Federal government could help influence suppliers through its purchasing and leasing specifications for paper, office equipment, fleet vehicles, office accommodation and other needs. Using its spending power in this way, the Federal government could promote greater attention to energy efficiency, environmental impact, product durability and recycling. Proceedings of a cross-government forum on green procurement are available at <http://www.iclei.org/anz/green/forum.htm>.

More freeways, more traffic

Most transport planners seem to accept that increasing road capacity in an established network is likely to induce more traffic, so any easing of congestion will only be short-lived. The enclosed paper by the WA Department of Transport reviews international studies of induced traffic. Also included is a summary of findings of the UK Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessments.

The Conservation Council has opposed the construction of Roe Highway stage 8 and the Fremantle Eastern Bypass (where federal funding would have been available). These roads would impact significantly on bushland and wetlands and local communities and fail to provide a sustainable solution to transport needs. Managing demand and making better use of existing infrastructure is a better approach, and is being pursued by the state government through its Freight Network Strategy.

AusLink

The Conservation Council would like to see AusLink expanded to cover urban passenger transport and include sustainability assessment of project proposals. The enclosed submission on the AusLink Green Paper details our views on this matter.

TravelSmart

Travel behaviour change provides a way of addressing transport problems without significant investment in new infrastructure. High and growing car use reflects transport infrastructure, land use patterns and the transport choices made by individuals and organisations. The TravelSmart programs run by state, territory and local governments are an innovative and effective way of reducing car use and its impacts by encouraging people to use travel alternatives more. An overview of TravelSmart initiatives is provided at www.travelsmart.gov.au.

Urban planning and growth management

Sprawling suburban growth around Australia's cities is not sustainable. The loss of natural ecosystems and agricultural land, encroachment into water catchments, and increased car dependency (so greater atmospheric pollution) and exposure to changes in oil supply should make urban sprawl a matter of national concern.

The Federal government should play a leadership role in managing urban growth to enhance sustainability. Previous studies such as the Australian Urban and Regional Development Review and National Housing Strategy suggest ways to do this as has the Planning Institute of Australia.

Water resources

Water supply is a matter of public concern in many cities, including Perth where climate change has reduced supply from catchments. Too much of the debate has centred on grand schemes to supply more water, too little thought has been given to reducing water demand. The Conservation Council has urged implementation of water conservation measures to reduce per capita consumption to 100 kL by 2007.

Population and consumption

As the Conservation Council's submission notes, population and consumption are fundamental influences on the sustainability of our cities. We urge the Committee to consider the need for sustainable population and consumption policies and the measures the Federal government can take to implement them.

Should you need further information or comment on points raised here please contact me on phone (08) 9429 7266 or email chris.tallentire@conservationwa.asn.au.

The Conservation Council looks forward the Committee's report, which we hope will advance Federal government action for sustainable cities.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Tallentire
Director