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Carol Faulkner

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Submission re: Natural Resources and Environment Discussion Paper

I am sending this submission with urgency because of three very important reports that were released this week which I believe demand immediate attention and inclusion in the discussion of natural resources and environment associated with South Australia's new planning system.

The three reports (with links to where they can be downloaded) are:-

Tracking Changes in South Australia's Environment, SA Department for Environment and Water
Released 10 October 2018

<https://data.environment.sa.gov.au/Content/Publications/DEW%20trend%20and%20condition%20report%20card%20summary.pdf>

Indaily gives a good coverage of the report here:

<https://indaily.com.au/news/2018/10/10/sas-train-wreck-climate-change-outlook/>

Global Warming of 1.5°C, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Released 8 October 2018

<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Limiting Temperature Rise to 1.5° C, Climate Council (Australia)

Released 8 October 2018

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resource/reports/>

The climate change reports identify the dire consequences if strong action is not taken immediately to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Global emissions must be down by at least 45% by 2030 from 2010 levels to keep global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C.

It's a clarion call to action and it involves everyone – all countries, states and cities, governments and citizens.

The release of the IPCC's latest report dramatically dials up the urgency of taking action on climate change and I submit it requires an immediate revision of all government policy, especially around population and planning, including all the draft policies that are currently under consideration regarding South Australia's planning system.

I reiterate what I said in my earlier submission on the draft State Planning Policies about rejecting the 30-Year Plan's targets that are driving the push for population growth and the associated proliferation of urban infill. I take that stance because of a lifelong concern for the River Murray and the environment in general.

As I said in my submission to the parliamentary inquiry into migration (copy supplied), societies everywhere must use human ingenuity to decouple economic growth from physical growth if we are to survive the existential crises of overpopulation and climate change.

Back to the Natural Resources and Environment Discussion Paper, I can't help pointing out the irony of the graphic on page 2 of the Discussion Paper Summary about trees and plants making a good city great. For goodness sake, trees are the first casualties of urban infill as we've all witnessed since the onslaught of infill began in earnest with the release of the 30-Year Plan.

Trees are critically important in reducing atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide plus for all the other reasons mentioned in the graphic (I can personally attest to the benefit of "healthier, happier and more productive people").

Proceeding with the 30-Year Plan's aim to house an extra 560,000 people in Greater Adelaide does not equate with wanting more trees in the metropolitan area and needing to reduce the effects of climate change. It is simply irreconcilable.

Drastic action is required now. Business as usual is not an option. The South Australian Government must go back to the drawing board on population and planning in light of the latest update on the clear and immediate danger of climate change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Faulkner', written in a cursive style.

Carol Faulkner, concerned citizen.

Carol Faulkner



28 September 2018

Economic and Finance Committee, Parliament of South Australia
via email: efc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au

RE: Inquiry into economic contribution of migration to South Australia

To the Members of the Economic and Finance Committee,

Please accept this letter as my submission on your inquiry into migration to South Australia.

By way of explanation of my interest in this subject, I spent nearly ten years of my life involved in the campaign to save Cheltenham Racecourse's 49 hectares of legislatively-proclaimed open space so it could be used for large-scale stormwater aquifer storage and recovery (ASR). The Cheltenham ASR plan was first advocated by the respected academics of Friends of Gulf St Vincent, and according to Adelaide's well-known stormwater expert Colin Pitman such a scheme could have yielded 30GL per annum of potable water (a third of Greater Adelaide's water needs). This was being proposed during a triple whammy of water-related crises – the millennium drought had brought the Murray to the brink of ecological disaster, the epic Adelaide Coastal Waters Study had identified the devastating effect stormwater pollution was having on Gulf St Vincent, and flood-mapping had identified critical stormwater flood risks in Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield Councils.

The proposed Cheltenham Racecourse ASR scheme had the potential to mitigate all three crises. Given that the then Labor State Government had articulated an official policy of opposing the sale of Cheltenham Racecourse, and (as revealed on radio by former SAJC CEO Steve Ploubidis) that the SAJC had offered the racecourse for sale to the State Government for a bargain price, I simply could not comprehend why the government rejected the SAJC's offer, then back-flipped on its objection to the sale, and then approved the racecourse's development for housing. How could housing be more important than a solution to the water crisis? I felt compelled to find an explanation.

My search for an answer prompted many hours of research. I discovered the Rann Government's 2004 policy "Prosperity through People"¹, and I looked into the population growth targets of the State Strategic Plan and the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide.

It became obvious to me that the Government was giving priority to projected economic gains of population growth over environmental and social considerations.

¹ Prosperity through People – A Population Policy for South Australia *Government of South Australia March 2004*

That is the brief explanation of how I became very concerned about the issue of population growth on a local, national and global level. In Australia and particularly South Australia, population growth is directly related to migration.

At this point it is necessary for me to dispel any accusation of racism that people concerned about population growth regularly face. My parents migrated to South Australia and married here in the 1950's. I acknowledge the important contribution that the Playford era of migration had on our state's development. The gist of my argument is that we live in a very different world to that of sixty years ago.

The 1960's historically gave birth to the first serious environmental movement along with a general heightened consciousness about the importance of preserving the natural environment. My public school education during that time instilled in me a lifelong concern for the environment and in particular for the health of the River Murray. I recall a specific school campaign to raise awareness about the importance of preserving River Murray water. It featured a cartoon character called "Mr Drip", and for a long time afterwards I went around everywhere making sure no taps were dripping.

Being of European descent, I love Australia's multicultural society. I love going to multicultural festivals and I'm a regular listener of EBI FM. I support Sustainable Australia which advocates increasing Australia's humanitarian intake of migrants. I abhor racism in any form. I emphasise this so that you understand my motivation for making this submission.

You surely must realise that an inquiry into migration cannot solely consider the economic contribution to South Australia without weighing up environmental and social consequences. All government decisions are required to address the triple bottom line – economy, society and environment. Despite the inquiry's one-sided terms of reference I will address each of these.

Economy

I have read that for each migrant, two, three or four jobs are created (it keeps changing). No reliable statistics are ever provided to substantiate this. My own search of ABS data between 2008 and 2016 showed unemployment went up in line with population growth².

An inquiry of this sort cannot look into the economic contribution of migration without also examining the economic cost of increasing the population. I can cite a very specific example in the doubling of the capacity of the Adelaide Desalination Plant (and associated cost), because of the 30-Year Plan's population targets³.

This is what acting Water Minister Michael O'Brien said in 2012:

I was involved in the 30-Year Plan for Adelaide, I chaired the review of the South Australian planning and development system, and basically put in place the outline for the 30-Year Plan. We had population projections supplied to us by the Bureau of Statistics, and before we could do anything in terms of planning potential growth over the next 30 years for Adelaide we had to assure ourselves that there was going to be sufficient water to support that population. And that's why we went for the larger plant.

² ABS stats 2008-2016

³ ABC radio transcript Acting Water Minister Michael O'Brien 5/10/12

The Committee must also consider the additional cost of roads, public transport, health, education and other government services and infrastructure that a bigger population requires.

Society

We are blessed here in Adelaide to be able to call our home one of the world's most liveable cities. I wholeheartedly believe that the high-quality lifestyle Adelaideans enjoy is attributable to its manageable population size, its mainly low-rise suburban built form, its abundance of natural landscape (both public and private), and its preservation of historic buildings and residential character areas.

Unfortunately it is these very qualities that are most at risk with the current direction being taken under the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide. And let's face it, everything hinges on the plan's population targets. The 30-Year Plan is essentially a strategy to cater for an artificially engineered influx of 560,000 new residents.

As someone who believes that environmental sustainability, quality of life and community wellbeing are equally important (if not more so) than economic objectives, I disagree with the population targets and I reject the underlying premise that South Australia cannot prosper without population growth. There are many ways our state can prosper while maintaining a relatively stable population. In the 21st century we can take advantage of the all-important 'critical mass' that exists in the global sphere without trying to recreate it here. South Australian exports are booming⁴, SAHMRI is achieving amazing things in medical research, and our state is ideally placed to become a world leader in the renewable energy industry, to name but three examples.

Polls consistently show that the overwhelming majority of people do not support population growth for the sake of growth alone. Quality of life is much more important. It is only big business that continually lobbies for more migration to generate evermore consumerism and profits. The group most conspicuous in that regard is the development industry. Adelaide has already experienced sweeping changes since the introduction of the 30-Year Plan. Urban infill driven by population growth has been swift and ubiquitous. In 2012, former Planning Minister John Rau wrote a letter to *The Advertiser* in which he claimed the following:

*"If we get the city rezoning right then the massive government investment in the city should lead to a substantial increase in the CBD population. The effect on the remaining suburban areas should be minimal. In fact, the 30-Year Plan predicts 80 per cent of Adelaide's suburbs will be largely unchanged."*⁵

Six years later it is patently obvious that a lot more than twenty per cent of suburban Adelaide has succumbed to the urban infill onslaught. Multi-storey apartments sprout up next door to traditional homes causing issues with privacy and access to sunlight. Two-for-one and three-for-one subdivisions are happening everywhere, even in character areas. With each one, gardens, trees, shrubs and birdlife vanishes. The effect this is having on the wellbeing of citizens should in itself be the subject of an inquiry.

⁴ "SA exports hit record high", *The Advertiser*, 21/9/18 web version:
<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/business/sa-business-journal/sa-wine-wheat-and-barley-help-the-states-export-figure-rise-to-62-billion/news-story/ced3f5fc9dfcabcd33047822c6830251>

⁵ "Reform city planning" – letter to the editor from John Rau, *The Advertiser*, 9/3/12

In the City of Charles Sturt we have experienced the worst of these impacts for a number of years; loss of public open space (eg Cheltenham/St Clair and West Lakes), and private open space (backyards) with associated loss of trees and biodiversity, and also the loss of character dwellings and streetscapes. Each subdivision takes away a valued aspect of the community that can never be replaced.

Infill has resulted in Charles Sturt Council losing more green space than any other South Australian council:

<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/messenger/west-beaches/charles-sturt-lost-most-green-space-of-any-south-australian-council-according-to-new-study/news-story/8a955a11bf1ef8529e485cfa6f45513d>

Infill has also resulted in Charles Sturt Council having amongst the smallest percentage of tree canopy cover⁶, and therefore unsurprisingly being one of the hottest councils as determined by urban heat mapping⁷.

The other inevitable impact of urban infill is increased stormwater runoff and flood risk through large scale loss of permeable surfaces associated with hard-top development. This has been a huge issue in Charles Sturt, and although much work has gone into stormwater management plans and infrastructure, further unabated infill risks surpassing the planned capacity of those works.

For these reasons I believe the City of Charles Sturt has met its capacity for population growth and urban infill, and that any further infill poses unacceptable risks to its residents and ratepayers.

Environment

As stated by Sustainable Australia, population is “the everything issue” – it is inextricably linked to all issues affecting human society. It is my belief that population should be considered in the same manner, and with the same level of urgency, as climate change. World overpopulation is just as much an existential threat as climate change (after all, one is causing the other) and all human societies, ie every town, city and country, no matter how big or small, must put sustainability above all other considerations. Instead of migration-fuelled population growth being used as a quick fix for economic growth, we must use human ingenuity to create wealth without physical growth.

I grant there is room for exceptions. I understand the plight of regional towns that are crying out for skilled workers and health professionals. As long as those communities are fully consulted, and growth can be sustainably accommodated, a scheme that targets migration to those regional towns that are in need of it could be considered. However, I object to the whole of South Australia including Greater Adelaide being part of such a scheme like it is/was in the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS). I supply with this submission a reply I received from the federal government regarding the RSMS for your information.⁸

As someone who is concerned about the environment I agree that we must limit urban sprawl, but I also submit that population growth and urban infill across Adelaide cannot continue unabated. To

⁶ Tree Canopy Cover in the City of Charles Sturt, Seed Consulting Services (2016). Available at: www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au (search “Tree Canopy Cover”)

⁷ Western Adelaide Urban Heat Mapping Project, Seed Consulting Services (2017). Available at: www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au (search “Urban Heat Mapping”)

⁸ Letter from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship dated 5/8/11

do so would bring about devastating environmental and social consequences and the end of our 'most liveable city' status.

The most important thing we should be aiming for is to decouple economic growth from physical growth. If you really think about it, it's what human populations everywhere need to do for the survival of life on Earth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol Faulkner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carol Faulkner, concerned citizen.