

## **About the SEQ Community Alliance: In detail**

The SEQ Community Alliance Inc is an alliance of community based non-government organisations concerned about the governance and planning issues and liveability of the SEQ Region of Queensland.

The SEQ Region defined by the Alliance is the region "covered" by the SEQ Regional Plan: Shaping SEQ.

The Alliance was formed to advocate community concerns about Queensland's statutory planning system and its system of local government. Queensland's current planning legislation is perceived as not working for the community and as having serious negative impacts on the region's residents. The need for the reform of local government has been highlighted by the recent Belcarra investigations and the ongoing revelations from subsequent inquiries.

## **The SEQ Community Alliance acknowledges the purpose of the Planning Act**

The Purpose of Planning Act 2016 is:

*(1) The purpose of this Act is to establish an efficient, effective, transparent, integrated, coordinated, and accountable system of land use planning (planning), development assessment and related matters that facilitates the achievement of ecological sustainability.*

It is also acknowledged that the definitions are expressed in far more detail than in the Sustainable Planning Act, to give positive guidelines. However are concerned that the planning processes are not being adhered to in implementation through city planning schemes.

Most residents of SEQ believe that town planning should maintain the amenity of their place of residence and deliver community cohesion, sustainability and resilience. Community anger has been building over many years and this outrage is now evident, in community feedback to our organisations, throughout South East Queensland. A succession of changes to planning laws in recent years have resulted in worsening liveability outcomes and increased community dissatisfaction with local and state government decision making processes.

Economic outcomes dominate decision making with social, heritage and environmental requirements being carefully circumvented by developers. There is inadequate provision of public open space and insufficient protection for green space and residents' amenity.

Many residents (arguably the majority of those aware of the planning system) hold the view that their input is routinely ignored. It is widely perceived that the development industry has been given a free hand to maximise profits at the expense of public interest and community values. In essence, town planning decisions that should be made by the community as a whole have been abrogated to developers. The current performance-based planning approach regularly results in outcomes that outrage local communities, because of the erosion of their rights to be heard and have their views incorporated in planning legislation and planning schemes. 2

A key concern is that so many developer applications seek excessive relaxations, well in excess of what is required in the SEQ Regional Plan population projections. These relaxations include height, density, setbacks, parking, infrastructure contributions and communal space with no corresponding (and demonstrable) community benefit in too many approved applications. In addition, the system of capped infrastructure charging is having perverse outcomes and should be reviewed or abolished.

Irrespective of recent reforms the planning system results in a complete change in the character of neighbourhoods. This is inherently unfair as the developer moves on, while the residents are left to cope with the often unwanted changes.

Community concerns include the confusing interface of planning schemes with State planning processes and policies and other land use planning arrangements. Local councils regularly justify their bad planning decisions with claims that they are being driven by the State government to accommodate large population increases, despite infrastructure inadequacies.

Perceptions of corruption in local government planning and development are reinforced, despite recent changes such as the Belcarra Bill reforms on donations.

The Alliance and its members are able to outline many serious concerns about the outcome failures of current planning rules in Queensland. Clearly, for further failures to be avoided it will be necessary to amend laws, policies and processes. A well-founded community alliance will help the government for directions for change which are seen as essential for the Government to take on board to regain the community's trust.

The Alliance is wanting to work with the Government to further a constructive and consultative process to address these serious community concerns about planning legislation, its implementation, and outcomes