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PLANNING IN DISARRAY.....A CATALOGUE OF CONFUSION

The Department of Planning, transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) is in considerable disarray. Some of its woes have been exposed in three [recent articles in In Daily](#), but the catalogue of dysfunction and confusion is extensive.

And all this is at a time when it is charged with developing, implementing and maintaining an untried, complex, new planning system and a novel electronic e-planning platform that is unique in Australia.

The Department has lost several key personnel this year, and staff morale is low. The pressures of constructing a 62,000 page Planning and Design Code and associated documents, followed by the intensive activity involved in trying to conduct a consultation exercise, and then being faced with the attempted correction of the myriad omissions and errors in the Code, must have taken a heavy toll.

On top of this, a recent appointment to the key Planning Reform Officer post has been dogged by controversy. The incumbent, domiciled in Sydney, was employed on a fly- in, fly-out basis, but following an industrial dispute he has been working from his Sydney base. This is an extraordinary arrangement, given the complexity and strategic importance of the e-planning system, which is central to the planned implementation and functioning of the Code.

Not only is the proposed new planning system in disarray, it is at serious risk of failure. Through its inept handling of this attempt at reform, the Government has betrayed the trust of the community, and it has alienated the goodwill and support of local Councils and key stakeholders.

Certainly, some aspects of our planning system need to be changed and streamlined, but in its heavy-handed attempt at wholesale ill-considered reform, the 'baby has been thrown out with the bathwater' and we may suffer the consequences for generations to come.

It is hard to predict what lies ahead. The implementation of Phase 2 (rural) and Phase 3 (urban) has been deferred repeatedly. This has been in response to the

ill-formed state of the Code and of its vital implementation tool, the electronic e-planning system.

There is now considerable pressure on the Planning Minister to further defer the Code for 12 months. This has come from the public in the form of a 14,000 signature Petition to Parliament, and also from opposition politicians, community organisations, and, even, some sections of industry.

The Code must now be subjected to a comprehensive review, restructure and genuine consultation, before it is implemented as an new, more sensible and acceptable planning reform.

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