



10 September 2013

Our Ref: MRA-02322 /375458

Jonathan Coppel
Presiding Commissioner
Major Project Development Assessment Processes
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Dear Mr Coppel

MAJOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Productivity Commission study of Major Project Development Assessment Processes across Australia. The MRA has reviewed the draft report and is supportive of the reform initiatives identified.

The MRA is a statutory authority of the Government of Western Australia, established under the *Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority Act 2011* (the Act) and reporting to the Minister for Planning. The Act provides powers to the MRA to plan, redevelop and manage development of designated land in the metropolitan region; and to establish the state agency with planning, development management, land acquisition and disposal and other functions in respect of that land. The MRA combines the responsibilities and projects undertaken by the former redevelopment authorities for East Perth, Subiaco, Midland and Armadale.

The MRA currently leads the way in best practice development control in Western Australia, with an outcomes based planning framework that uses performance based development assessment criteria.

The MRA has reviewed the draft report and is supportive of reform initiatives for major project development assessment that make improvements on the identified issues:

- Achieving regulatory objectives;
- Reducing regulatory overlap and duplication;
- Improving timeframes and coordination;
- Regulatory certainty, transparency and accountability;
- Compliance costs.

The following comments are offered regarding the draft recommendations of particular relevance to the operations of the MRA.

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7.4 Major projects office

The MRA is supportive of the establishment of a Major Projects Coordination Office as described in draft recommendation 7.4. where this is deemed necessary. However, as the Western Australian Government has already implemented a 'Lead Agency Framework', managed through the Department of State Development, a Major Projects Coordination Office would appear to be a duplication of this function.

Through the Lead Agency Framework model, major projects in WA are assigned to a Lead Agency that works with project proponents to manage all Government interactions and statutory approvals; helping improve efficiency and reduce the time taken to deliver projects, whilst fully considering the public interest.

The Lead Agency model enables the Department of State Development to work more closely with project proponents and approvals agencies to ensure we better expedite and facilitate responsible development. More information is available here: <http://www.dsd.wa.gov.au/7633.aspx>.

It may be appropriate to rework the structure or function of the Lead Agency Framework to more closely align with the Major Project Coordination Offices if established in each state for consistency. In addition, it should be noted that MRA redevelopment projects should not be impacted by any implemented changes to Major Project development assessment, as the MRA has an established coordinating and strategic planning function over its redevelopment areas, including stakeholder engagement and management of statutory approvals.

6.11 Major project approval pathways

The MRA supports draft recommendation 6.1 regarding designated major project approval pathways. Embedding regulatory certainty, transparency and accountability in the process of deciding which projects will be subject to the designated major project pathway is vital for this process to be supported by all levels of government and industry.

11.1 Strategic Assessment

The MRA is supportive of Draft Recommendation 11.1 – Use of Strategic Assessments. However, more information and investigation of how strategic assessment would work is required before any reforms are implemented. There is a concern that strategic assessment may create another layer of regulatory control, further reducing the efficiency of development assessment without providing significant benefit.

Any implemented reforms to the assessment of major projects must ensure that existing environmental protections remain uncompromised.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Keys
Executive Director Planning