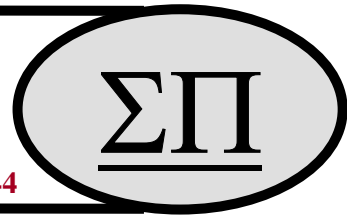


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Our Ref : W97-0100

The Hon John Howard MHR
Prime Minister
Commonwealth of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

COPY

13 November 2006

Dear Prime Minister

RAINBOW 2000[®] - a Regional Planning Strategy for Albany & the Great Southern

The Rainbow 2000[®] Project is both a significant investment opportunity and a research-based examination of the inter-relationship between planning, politics and regional development in Australia. I marvel at the challenge of re-establishing community confidence in strategic planning, and still consider Albany & the Great Southern one of the best opportunities for regional economic development in Australia.

Today is the 10th Anniversary of the copyright publication of the Rainbow 2000[®] Project – 13 November 1997.

Since 1997, the Plantation Timber industry is now well established; Fletchers Narrikup Abattoir export quality meats overseas; the Ravensthorpe Nickel mine is operational; CBH has significantly expanded grain storage and handling at the Port of Albany; the Wellstead Magnetite, Lignor Strand Lumber and the Beacons Biomass projects are all firming possibilities; and Bremer Basin Oil & Gas exploration is gaining momentum.

Urban development in the now City of Albany continues to expand as does the population, and the signs are present after 20 years of neglect that strategic planning (local & regional) is back on the political agenda. As a profession, I am not confident that the local planners have genuinely facilitated that process as opposed to directing community aspiration to pre-conceived outcomes (rather than canvassing opportunity).

In my opinion, achieving meaningful community participation has been less than adequate, and the adoption of consultant recommendation and embrace of private enterprise investment initiative has been less than credible. Public infrastructure investment, however, has been outstanding by the Water Corporation (mains distribution and water storage), Western Power (Albany windfarm) and Telstra (mobile & ADSL networks).

The Albany waterfront project after thirty-years of indecision is now closer than ever before. While the city's anti-development group in association with the region's port users recently made an impassioned but ineffectual plea to save that space for very different reasons. The fact is that no credible transport plan has emerged over the last decade which implies that heavy freight access to the port will be a recurring issue with no solution.

With reference to our [AusLink](#) submission dated 11 February 2003 (refer website), and as stated in several of our letters over the years "You can spend hundreds of millions of dollars to make a bad location workable, but Albany is the original hard rock and wall". The question is : Why would you if there were a far better opportunity to provide a long-term solution? And why wouldn't you ? Commercial competition and market manipulation.

Most recently, you will be aware of our call for the development of a National Celebration Strategy for [Anzac 2014-18](#), highlighting the role of Albany during that conflict as the first visual expression of the Anzac legend. The Anzac tradition has grown significantly in stature and psyche of Australian cultural heritage, and while it will change with the passing of each generation, ultimately it is one character that garners instant respect.

It was quite interesting to listen to the speech of the Chairman of the Western Australian Planning Commission at the [Infrastructure WA 2006](#) Conference held in Perth recently advocating greater regional autonomy for self-determination, and to see his reaction to our Rainbow 2000[®] Project exhibition at that forum.

Likewise, to expose the limitations and deficiencies of the governance strategic planning process (AusLink, WA State Infrastructure Strategy, the Lower Great Southern Regional Strategy, and the Draft Albany Local Planning Strategy) only serves to highlight why Australia struggles to move forward in a local-global context.

There have been outstanding achievements relative to social welfare reform and youth development (not Aged); however, progress on Native Title has been largely ineffective at delivering broad-based indigenous outcome.

Earlier this year, I addressed the Commonwealth Study Conference at Marlborough House in London in the lead-up to the 2007 Conference in India, Malaysia & Singapore. I raised three points for discussion, that :

1. **Energy** was an issue not canvassed in the draft conference agenda, and that it would be desirable for the Commonwealth to develop a global position statement in respect to Nuclear power given Australia and Canada's relative wealth of uranium ore – it was agreed to place energy on the agenda.
2. **Religion** could be an issue to place on the draft agenda, given that this Xth CSC would experience as diverse a range of religious denomination as any before being predominantly Anglo-Saxon Christian in cultural heritage and dominion – it was agreed to retain the CSC framework as apolitical areligious.
3. While the **United Nations** had served the world well for the past 60 years, perhaps it was time to promote a restructure with a new vision for the 21st Century, and a new home somewhere in Asia considering the emergence of that socio-economic and political continent – point noted, but it was suggested that global restructuring of human aid management was beyond the scope of one CSC event.

In our recent submission to the Planning Institute of Australia Survey on Regional Economic Development in Australia, I suggested that what we are currently witnessing is the “systemic failure of governance expressed through elected representation, public administration and legislation across all four levels – local, regional, state and federal”, premised mainly on the division of equity / inequality in Australian society (Core KRAs).

I prefer to consider it a new dawn on Australian politics, where power is reinvested in community. I anticipate that the next ten / twenty years including Albany Anzac 2014-18 and Albany Bicentennial 2026-27 will be equally revealing as Australia transitions through several election cycles (Local, State & Federal).

The file [R2000Participation.zip](#) (~1.1MB & ~250 A4 page MS Word Document) available from the Smithson Planning website, documents the more than 10,000 participative actions to date of various stakeholder groups relating to the Rainbow 2000 Project. I think it also provides valuable insight into the need for Infrastructure, Industry, State Government and Local Government reform in relation to regional development in Australia.

For the last time prior to the pending 2007 Federal election, if you would care for a briefing on the project (30 minute PowerPoint presentation), please advise.

Yours faithfully,

SMITHSON PLANNING

Neil R. Smithson

Neil R. Smithson

Managing Director
PIA^{CPP}, EIANZ, NELA, LGPA, AAPC, NTWA, FDI, CSC 2003

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