

# SMITHSON PLANNING

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## RAINBOW 2000<sup>©</sup> PROJECT.

(Incorporating Albany Anzac 2014-18<sup>©</sup> Re-enactment and Albany Bicentennial 2026-27<sup>©</sup>)

- a Regional Planning Strategy for Albany and the Great Southern.

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**RAINBOW 2000<sup>©</sup> - A REGIONAL PLANNING STRATEGY  
FOR ALBANY & THE GREAT SOUTHERN (Western Australia)**  
Presented by Neil Smithson, Managing Director, Smithson Planning

### PREFACE

When people ask what a Planner does, I suggest ‘They should be able to identify opportunity and put it together with motivation to produce outcome for the general benefit of the community.’

As a community, we need to empower our elected representatives with the knowledge and understanding of what we are trying to achieve, and for them in turn to lead – vision set – and ultimately, make effective decisions on our behalf having due regard for the environment. Planning (urban, rural or remote) is the consideration of all relevant issues, emphasising at any point in time economic, social and ecological factors within a political framework, with attendant provision for finance as a process of implementation.

There are several politically challenging propositions built into the Rainbow 2000<sup>©</sup> package for :

- ❖ Federal Government (phasing out unemployment benefits as a function of social security)
- ❖ State Government (the privatisation of State government assets and processes)
- ❖ Regional Government (commercial competition in the strategic planning sector)
- ❖ Local Government (commercial competition in the statutory & strategic planning sector)
- ❖ All Australians (resolution of the Native Title issue via regional S.21 agreement).

### THE RAINBOW 2000 STRATEGY

Smithson Planning of Albany, consultants in Town Planning and Environmental Assessment, prepared a conceptual approach to the review of future planning for the amalgamated Albany City Council and the lower Great Southern Region of Western Australia. Rainbow 2000<sup>©</sup> is a most interesting investment proposition, but also questions the hypothesis – is planning the antithesis of politics.

The regional strategy comprises six main elements being :

- ❖ A planning policy statement (framework for investment programs)
- ❖ A regional planning initiatives statement for the Great Southern Region
- ❖ A metropolitan Albany planning initiatives statement

- ❖ An Albany central business district planning initiatives statement
- ❖ Albany Anzac 2014-18 Re-enactment<sup>©</sup> – a major event (marketing / promotional strategy)
- ❖ Albany 2026-27<sup>©</sup> – a Bicentennial Celebration of European Settlement in Western Australia.

Some of the main aspects of the regional strategy include a population by Year 2029 of 250,000 permanent residents spread across Albany (150,000), Denmark (30,000), Mt.Barker (30,000), Bremer Bay (30,000) and Cranbrook (10,000), representing a conservative annual population growth rate of 5% in the region (at the ABS 2006 Census – Albany recorded 2.4% p.a. – twice the national average).

To sustain economic development, there must be the underlying capacity to create employment, a willingness to invest by the private sector, and public infrastructure to facilitate that process.

Several prominent development industries have commenced or are in the process of realisation, and these include (alphabetical order – no particular priority) :

- ❖ Aquaculture product development projects – Bremer Bay Abalone & Patagonian Toothfish
- ❖ Business personnel profile and registration systems – AlbanyGateWAY
- ❖ Commercial accommodation – Esplanade Hotel, Middleton Beach, Albany
- ❖ Commercial and industrial – Brooks Garden, Orana, Albany Plaza Shopping Centres
- ❖ Domestic and export meat market – Narrikup abattoir, Mt.Barker saleyards
- ❖ Domestic and export wines – Frankland River, Plantagenet, Denmark, Albany
- ❖ Electronic communications enhancement projects – Hi Speed Internet & G3 Roll-out
- ❖ Entertainment & Arts – Albany Entertainment, Exhibition & Conference Centre, Leisure Aqua
- ❖ Forest product development – Lignor Strand Lumber, Woodchip Export, Paper Pulpmill
- ❖ Light industry needs assessment and market development projects – Mirrambeena Estate
- ❖ Management and personnel skills identification projects – UWA / TAFE Tertiary Education
- ❖ Oil & gas exploration project – Bremer Basin
- ❖ Power enhancement projects (biomass, wind power & gas pipeline)
- ❖ Raw material resource projects – Ravensthorpe Nickel & Southdown Magnetite
- ❖ Transport infrastructure – Cruise Ships, Albany Ring Road & Waterfront Marina

Albany is at a key point in its development. The community has reached a permanent resident population in the municipality of 33,500 with an estimated wider regional service population of 75,000. There are signs of major industrial expansion; however, there is inherent growth scepticism, and a perception of fear of loss of identity / individuality as a predominantly rural community.

The sea-change, tree-change and local residents / visitors alike seek improvements in lifestyle, education, housing choice, housing affordability, health, entertainment, retail convenience and employment opportunity, but not at the expense of crime, traffic congestion, pollution, etc.

The Albany Central Business District is under pressure to accommodate change. Harboursing an historic image, and presuming that the Port's industrial service activities can successfully be relocated to Vancouver Peninsula, the Albany CBD would assume an 'English Quarter' status similar to the 'French Quarter' in New Orleans (USA) and the 'Portuguese Quarter' in Malacca (Malaysia).

The current deep water berths would be retained for visiting Cruise Liners and Naval Warships, as these activities essentially involve tourist interaction with the town area, and resupply of provisions. The existing grain handling facilities would be converted into two major five star hotels with attendant casino, exhibition space, entertainment, cultural, and convention facilities, and commercial service outlets.

#### ALBANY ANZAC 2014-18 – A MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

If the community of Albany is prepared to adopt Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup>, then the task requires presenting the City of Albany and the Great Southern Region to the world to encourage economic investment (capital and recurrent).

The 100<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Anzac tradition will be a five-year period of substantial tourism development, and both the State Government of Western Australia and the City of Albany have resolved to make Albany Anzac an icon event in the program of tourism events. Together with the Federal Government and sister city relationships with Gallipoli (Gelibolu) in the Republic of Turkey, there is a proposal for the development of the Albany Anzac Peace Park as part of the city's foreshore.

The Albany Anzac re-enactment relates to commercial and military shipping assembling in King George Sound, Albany on or about November 2014 and April 2015, and subsequently each of the following years perhaps culminating with Remembrance Day in November 2018.

#### ALBANY 2026-27 – A BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

The relationship between Albany and Perth in terms of establishment, history, politics, economy, community and environment, is viewed as hostile and tumultuous. Development trends were profoundly changed by the establishment of the Swan River colony by Captain James Stirling in 1827, and the proclamation of Western Australia in Perth as the capital city in 1829.

Further, Lord John Forrest as the Governor of Western Australia orchestrated the construction of the Port of Fremantle in 1897 by notable engineer C.Y. O'Connor, and the transfer in 1901 of the sea mail route from Albany to Perth as a function of federation, better communications and state development.

Sustainability is an emerging currency in Australian urbanism, and considered debate would suggest that all cities exhibit their relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In our opinion however, change is a fundamental prerequisite for growth and development. The ability to manage urban change is the greatest challenge confronting most small to medium sized western cities.

However, what happens when the State Government is non-committal to regional development, and the political horizon to resolve an issue central to the future urban development of a smaller regional city (particularly the first European settlement in Western Australia) is extremely contentious, and extends beyond the State (2001, 2005, 2009, 2013) or Federal (1996, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2010) election cycle – the question arises as to when politics embraces change.

#### PLANNING – A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TOOL (or not)

There are two principal Planning Schemes guiding subdivision and the development of land in the City of Albany, being the :

- ❖ Town of Albany Town Planning Scheme No.1A, gazetted on 30 December 1983 (~24 years old) – to date, the Albany City Council (former Town) has resolved to initiate 161 amendments
- ❖ Shire of Albany Town Planning Scheme No.3, gazetted on 15 February 1980 (~27 years old) – to date the Albany City Council (former Shire) has resolved to initiate 267 amendments.

On 11 April 2000, the City of Albany resolved to prepare a new comprehensive Town Planning Scheme to replace and update their District Planning Scheme (covering the entire municipality – Government Gazette 25 January 2001), and to date that process has produced several draft Local Planning Strategies but not a first draft consolidated Town Planning Scheme.

In the interim, the City of Albany have published three informal strategic planning documents :

- ❖ Albany 2020 – Charting our course (2001)
- ❖ Albany's 3D Future – a Corporate Plan (2003)
- ❖ Albany Draft Local Planning Strategy – Version 3 (2007).

The Western Australian Planning & Development Act 2005 requires a comprehensive review of a District Planning Scheme every five years. The age and condition of the two statutory planning instruments should be considered unacceptable in today's economic circumstances, and it is suggested that this situation has severely hampered business development and reduced investment confidence in the lower Great Southern Region over the last decade (typically density residential development).

Historically, the State government through the Western Australian Planning Commission and the Environmental Protection Authority has coordinated a number of planning strategies in order to advance development, including :

- ❖ Research – Albany District Regional Vegetation Survey – May 2007
- ❖ Research – Albany Perth & Albany Bunbury (Infrastructure) Corridors – May 2007
- ❖ Draft Lower Great Southern Regional Strategy – November 2006
- ❖ Albany Residential Expansion Strategy – June 1994
- ❖ Albany Regional Strategy – June 1994
- ❖ Albany Commercial Strategy – August 1994.
- ❖ Albany Regional Rural Strategy – October 1991
- ❖ Albany Tomorrow (Waterfront Project) – 1983.

With the change of State government in 2001 (Labor replaced the Coalition), Albany elected a Labor member for the first time in 27 years, and Stirling (Mt.Barker and Denmark) retained their National member with support from the Greens – both were re-elected in 2005. However, in 2005 there was a further mandate for one-vote-one-value eliminating the quasi-Gerrymander that existed between country and city seats in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

The current Minister for Planning & Infrastructure – the Hon. Alannah MacTiernan MLA, in 2001 directed the WA Planning Commission to prepare a new Regional Planning Strategy for Albany and the lower Great Southern region. While that process has produced a draft report that failed to address the issues of Heritage and Risk Management, it is yet to be formally considered by State Parliament. The WAPC has also initiated state-wide research on 'What is regional planning?'

In 2001, the Council of the City of Albany formally resolved via its Town Planning Scheme Review Advisory Committee not to investigate the prospect of seaport relocation, and the Minister for Planning & Infrastructure not so respectfully declined to be briefed on the Rainbow 2000 project.

In 2003, the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority recommended to the then Minister for Environment & Heritage – the Hon. Judy Edwards MLA, that an informal level of assessment (non-statutory community consultation) should apply to the transport of woodchips by various independent forestry groups between various Great Southern timber plantations and the Port.

There is a dedicated wood chip mill and railway siding at the Mirrambeena Estate for the major international timber group, while the smaller 'privateers' chip their logs in the field, and a single multi-user export facility at the port, accessible by road and rail.

That decision was appealed by the Hon. Dr Christine Sharp MLC (Member for the South-West Region and WA Greens Party) and various other individuals, but supported by the City of Albany in the face of mediocre community opposition. The Minister for Environment & Heritage dismissed the appeal, and upheld the level of assessment, acknowledging the cumulative impact of port related transport

operations and citing the strategic planning work being carried out by the Minister for Planning & Infrastructure to facilitate future heavy haulage in the region.

A port access solution comprising two standard gauge rail lines and a four-lane grade separated controlled access road is considered the minimum acceptable risk management standard to any industrial port in Australia. Based on this expectation, there are several specific constraint points between travel modes that will require short or long-term traffic management solutions, but in the mean time pose a risk management threat that the political powers to date are ignoring.

If the State Government continue to support Road Transport B-Trains and Triples and introduce Quads, it should be self-evident that given the nature of some of the volatile products, there is substantial potential for even a minor accident to give rise to a major transport incident with attendant need for emergency management. The prospect of railway enhancement is not an easy proposition.

We could ask industry and the State & Federal Governments to spend millions of dollars to make a bad location workable, but why should they – Albany is the original hard rock and a wall. In fact, between 2003 and 2006, there has been an estimated A\$250 million dollar investment in the Port of Albany infrastructure (woodchip export terminal & grain storage and handling), with the Minister for Planning & Infrastructure granting a new 50-year lease to CBH (bulk grain) in September 2006.

#### PORT RELOCATION : THE CENTRAL INITIATIVE

There are several commercial propositions identified in the Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> Project; however, the single most important outcome influencing the intensity of future development is the relocation of the Albany Port Authority industrial handling facilities (tourist facilities to remain where they are and enhanced significantly).

The proposed location for the industrial port facilities on Vancouver Peninsula is approximately 10 times larger in land-backed area; considered more cost effective to service than the existing port location; and provides a 100 year growth path for the Port of Albany. While it is located 30 km more distant from the producer, direct access to King George Sound facilitates larger carriers and heavier tonnage shipping (economy of scale). It can be argued that transport costs are a function of travel distance, travel time and risk management (each has both land and sea based aspect to evaluate).

In 2007, it is estimated that to relocate the industrial asset will cost in the order of \$1.8 billion. However, once these aspects of the port are relocated, the entire city foreshore is made available for redevelopment, which is conservatively estimated to be worth in excess of \$2.8 billion.

Under Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup>, the proposal is to partially privatise the Albany Port Authority / Albany Airport / Albany Ring Road, under the auspices of an Albany Ports Corporation, with private investment taking a sixty (60%) percent share holding in the business through the sale of State government asset (estimate minimum public subscription of \$1.2 billion); the balance of the investment arising from property development of the vacated port land.

The Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> regional strategy effectively separates two conflicting land use activities and provides for more efficient use of land / water resources, using the commercial investment / privatisation process to facilitate asset relocation and development.

There is sufficient room in the existing port area for current anticipated port development activity. However, the main weakness is the highly constrained narrow land-bridge corridor across the city foreshore to the rural hinterland (road & rail), which is directly opposed to potential future town development and expansion – the Albany Waterfront Project & Entertainment Centre.



After 20-30 years of discussion / debate, the 2001 new Member for Albany – Mr Peter Watson MLA, committed \$12.8m to the marina / small boat harbour establishment on the Albany foreshore to service various aspects of maritime development (eg. Fishing fleet, private yacht / cruiser pens, commercial harbour tours, HMAS Perth dive wreck operators, etc).

In 2005 following his (and the Labor Party) re-election, the Albany waterfront project became a \$45 million promise, and in April 2007, work finally commenced on a new \$2.5m pedestrian footbridge to link the Albany CBD to the waterfront over Princess Royal Drive. Marina development and commercial land use activity are supposed to progress in the next twelve months, and open in early 2009 (just in time for the next State election).

#### SOCIAL REFORM – A TANGENTIAL OPPORTUNITY

Australia, and particularly Western Australia, is currently operating at record levels of employment, due in large to the export resources boom supporting population and employment growth. In 2007, Bernard Salt, a Director and Demographer with KPMG Australia rated Albany the #1 hot-spot city in Australia based on employment growth (11.0% pa) relative to population growth (2.4% pa).

It is plausible that the current system of social security (which some would view as social or political dependence) could be replaced with a system of employment insurance, and over a prescribed time frame (eg. five years) phase out unemployment benefits by annual increments of twenty (20%) percent. The savings generated to the government would be transferred in to a Capital Works Development Fund, and used for the construction of major government projects to support development – a very large ‘work for the dole scheme’.

The strategy also contains a unique proposal for resolution of Native Title based on employer contributions from existing taxation based on annual staffing levels (with an allowance for current Noongar employment). Funds raised would be administered under a competitive arrangement within the region between Noongar employment development groups based on demonstrated performance to create and retain jobs.

#### POLITICAL PROCESS

Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> started as a challenge from the business community to “take off the blinkers and have a really good look at what might be achievable”. Between 1997 and today, more than 17,000 actions have taken place to facilitate community participation and promote the Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> Project.

Over the last ten (10) years, relevant political groups in the community have rationalised into three dominant philosophical areas :

- ❖ Pro-Port – advocating rural issues as the major focus for the future
- ❖ Pro-City – advocating urban issues as the major focus for the future
- ❖ Anti-development – advocating no (sustainable) development as the future focus.

The Albany Chamber of Commerce & Industry on 10 August 1999, did resolve unanimously to encourage Smithson Planning to refer Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> to both the Albany City Council and the State Government of Western Australia for a comprehensive technical and financial evaluation.

There is correspondence on file from the former Premier Richard Court dated 10 November 1999 stating in part “Albany City Council as the appropriate body to present the Rainbow 2000 Strategy to State Government for consideration .... look forward to the City’s approach to me about this matter.”

There is further correspondence on file from the now former Premier Geoff Gallop (then Opposition Leader) dated 15 June 2000 stating in part “Regional economic development on a sustainable basis is an important issue for us all and I await with interest the technical and financial evaluations that are being done of the Rainbow 2000 concept.”

There is a further letter dated 10 July 2000 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson stating “it is encouraging that visionary ideas are being proposed for regional Australia”.

It was proposed to settle the question via referendum so that no political party in State government can ignore the mandate (which is part of the problem). In this way, there was a decision relating to the future of development of Albany regardless of which way the community vote, and a direction to all levels of government at the time as to the priority between conflicting land use activities. There are still current calls for a referendum from the anti-development and port groups, but those gestures pertain to testing community support for the Albany waterfront project and entertainment centre.

#### PROJECT ANALYSIS

In suggesting that the port relocate, it was simply a matter of maximising the opportunity (and investment return) to the community of Albany based on predictable development patterns, and providing a long-term growth path for a range of export / import industries related to the region.

Since the port has constructed six new hectares of prime waterfront real estate on the city side of Princess Royal Harbour (and now considering further expansion for iron-ore export capacity), this means that either it gets an effective transport access route along the city foreshore, or it has a limited operational life for industry.

Looking to the future, it is the Port that is under threat, not the City. There is case evidence around Australia where eighteen cities have had to negotiate port relocation because of urban encroachment in situations that were far less ‘delicate’ relative to adjoining constraints on development.

The railway corridor serving the current port location passes between two buildings that are listed on the register of the National Estate and the State Heritage Register, and together form an integral part of the oldest European heritage precinct in Western Australia. In January 2007, the now former Federal Minister for Environment & Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell (Liberal WA) announced a UNESCO nomination for World Heritage recognition of Australia’s convict colonial settlements.

In March 2007, Senator Ruth Webber (Labor WA) posed a series of questions to the Hon Malcolm Turnbull (Senator Campbell’s successor) as to why Albany, Western Australia had been omitted by the consultants preparing the UNESCO nomination, and if the Minister was now prepared to entertain an addendum for that purpose – the question is yet to be answered in the lead-up to the 2007 Federal election.

While local politics changes periodically, both Labor and Liberal Governments in Western Australia have supported Albany foreshore development (noting that the National Party has never formed government in its own right but essentially opposes any activity that would compromise port accessibility). Foreshore development should eventuate this century, and historically there is :

- ❖ America’s Great White Fleet 2007-08 – visiting Sydney, Melbourne & Albany in 1908
- ❖ Albany Anzac 2014-18 Re-enactment – the assembly and departure of the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in 1914
- ❖ Albany 2026-27 – the Bicentennial of European settlement in Western Australia in 1826-27.

The motive behind Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> is simple, and relates to getting the economy moving again – but the process demands community support – and if given may constitute the largest community participation / empowerment process in Australian political history since Federation and Conscription.

In ten years, the West Australian Newspaper and the Sunday Times have never published one item about Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> that we are aware of; the WA Business News published one small piece suggesting some reticence about the continuity of port access in the framework of a significant port expansion program to accommodate grain, woodchips and iron ore.

Perth television STW9, TVW7 & NEW10 have never covered Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup>, and both GWN and WIN as regional networks have not canvassed the regional strategy. ABC National (radio & television) maintains a largely anti-development stance in the Great Southern (they have done some very good work on the Anzacs), and RadioWest perhaps sceptically accepted a paid advertisement.

There were the original paid advertisements referred to by the Albany Town & Shire Councils of 13 November 1997 appearing in the Albany Advertiser and the Albany & Great Southern Weekender, with the occasional timely paid reminder advertisement in the Albany Advertiser to reflect that Rainbow 2000<sup>®</sup> – a Regional Planning Strategy for Albany & the Great Southern was not going away.

It is reasonable to suggest that few people understand let alone endorse long-term strategic planning that doesn't directly benefit them instantly. In ten years, the program of community consultation / participation has included advice in some form or other to the full range of governance :

- ❖ Australian embassies of the nations of the World, the United Nations & European Union
- ❖ Governor-General of Australia, and every Federal member of parliament (House & Senate)
- ❖ Prime Minister & Federal Cabinet, and the Leader of the Opposition & Shadow Cabinet
- ❖ Governor of WA, and every State member of parliament (Legislative Assembly & Council)
- ❖ WA Premier & Cabinet, the Leader of the Opposition & Shadow Cabinet
- ❖ Premiers / Ministers of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania
- ❖ Chief Ministers / Ministers of the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory
- ❖ Relevant Federal and State agencies / regulatory authorities
- ❖ Great Southern, and other Regional Development Commissions of Western Australia
- ❖ Fremantle Ports, Westralia Airports Corporation, and the Albany Port Authority
- ❖ Australian Local Government Association and each State / Territory Association
- ❖ Local Government Authorities of Western Australia & the Great Southern
- ❖ Mayor / President & Councillors of the Town, Shire and City of Albany
- ❖ Lord Mayors & Councillors of the Cities of Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide
- ❖ Presidents & Executive Committees of the WA and Albany Chambers of Commerce & Industry.

It is not our place to judge the politics – that will be for the electorate, and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. All in all – things are looking very good. A general disclaimer applies to this material – don't assume, please ask.

More information is available at [www.smithsonplanning.com.au](http://www.smithsonplanning.com.au).