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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER,
ENVIRONMENT AND THE ARTS

Reference: Climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities

THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2008

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER, ENVIRONMENT AND THE ARTS**

Thursday, 13 November 2008

Members: Ms George (*Chair*), Dr Washer (*Deputy Chair*), Mr John Cobb, Mrs D’Ath, Mr Dreyfus, Mrs Irwin, Ms Livermore, Ms Marino, Mr Scott and Mr Zappia

Members in attendance: Ms George, Mrs Irwin, Ms Livermore, Ms Marino, Dr Washer

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities. The committee will inquire into and report on issues related to climate change and environmental pressures experienced by Australian coastal areas, particularly in the context of coastal population growth. The inquiry will have particular regard to:

- existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, taking in the catchment-coast-ocean continuum
- the environmental impacts of coastal population growth and mechanisms to promote sustainable use of coastal resources
- the impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise
- mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities
- governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone.

WITNESSES

JAY, Ms Di, Chief Executive Officer, Planning Institute of Australia..... 1

SAVERY, Mr Neil, National President, Planning Institute of Australia 1

Committee met at 10.55 am**JAY, Ms Di, Chief Executive Officer, Planning Institute of Australia****SAVERY, Mr Neil, National President, Planning Institute of Australia**

CHAIR (Ms George)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts. The committee is inquiring into climate change and the environmental impacts on coastal communities. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and the Minister for Climate Change and Water have asked this committee to examine the environmental impacts of coastal population growth as well as the impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise. The committee will also look at existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities, and governance arrangements for the coastal zone.

I welcome officials from the Planning Institute of Australia to this public hearing. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Savery—As well as being the National President of the Planning Institute of Australia I am the chief planner for the ACT government.

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that these hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. In this regard the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received your submission and it has been authorised for publication.

I sincerely thank the Planning Institute of Australia for its interaction with this committee over a number of years. Your input in the past has been very valuable in terms of our *Sustainable cities* report and the follow-up sustainability charter. We are delighted that you have again taken this opportunity to give your wisdom and input. We look forward to your contribution this morning. I now invite you to make a brief opening statement if you so wish before we proceed to questions and discussion.

Ms Jay—Thank you. We would also like to put on the record our thanks to the committee for its enduring interest in those issues.

Mr Savery—We are grateful for the continued interest in these issues. We do draw upon submissions to those previous inquiries. We compliment the government and the ministers involved in having this inquiry.

The Planning Institute of Australia, despite the fact that it obviously has a broader remit in looking at the development of urban and rural communities, sees coastal development as a key issue. In fact, both Ms Jay and I have come back from two conferences in China—one was the Global Planners Network and the other was the fourth World Urban Forum. These issues are paramount, particularly for developing nations, where huge populations typically in slum type settlements are located on river deltas and low-lying areas. Australia is by no means immune.

Geography of human settlement is one of coastal location and delta settlement because traditionally that is where our economic means of transport occurred and where the hinterland provided sources of food.

You will see from our detailed submission that one of the key concerns that we often feel gets overlooked is the impact of sea level rises and other environmental issues associated with climate change on the peri-urban areas, which are the rural hinterlands, the high-intensity rural food bowls, around the perimeter of Australian cities. In addition to any consideration of the impact itself on human settlement, it is the adjacent areas of both agricultural and environmental significance that are at play here.

I think you are aware that the Planning Institute is the peak body for urban planners nationally. We have around 4,500 to 5,000 members. They are not necessarily all planning professionals; we represent a number of allied interests. We try to work and promote collaborative action, so we believe it is critical to work with engineers, landscape architects, architects, social planners and transport planners in addressing some of these critical issues. That is certainly the case in relation to climate change and the impacts of climate change on human settlements and coastlines.

I will just draw some key issues of concern out of the detailed submission that you would probably be aware of. The rapid growth of coastal areas and their hinterlands—40 per cent of growth in non-metropolitan areas is estimated to be in those types of areas by 2050. Threats to property and life in coastal areas will result in financial, environmental and social impacts on communities, governments and ecosystems. We are already aware that the Insurance Council of Australia is now cautioning that there are about 710,000 and rapidly rising addresses across urban areas and coastal communities that are vulnerable to inundation and are unlikely to be capable of being insured against issues associated with climate change. Local governments are struggling to meet the demands for appropriate infrastructure and services with the current infrastructure backlog possibly assigned \$14.5 billion, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers. Coastal areas are vulnerable to a range of potential damage from climate change, such as whether it affects human health, sea level rise, coastal hazards and extreme rainfall. The issue that was stressed to us in China is that, whilst we always have and always will have natural hazards associated with human settlement, the potential of climate change to exaggerate those hazards is the issue at stake. Coastal communities are particularly vulnerable and communities in the northern parts of Australia are even more so because of cyclones. Cyclones could move further south to the point where even places like Brisbane may be seriously affected.

Skills shortage and unmet training and development needs within the planning profession and other related professions is a critical issue that the Planning Institute has identified in the past. We have been quite keen to impress upon governments at all levels to support what we believe are critical areas of training and development of skills for those professionals who are going to be exposed to these issues and are increasingly having the expectation placed upon them by political masters and communities that they are meant to be experts in these areas and they are not because it is a whole new science for planning that we are trying to come to terms with. And, of course, the science appears to change every time we have new conference and every time a new scientist or scientific body comes and presents to us. We do not necessarily have all of the answers at our fingertips.

In PIA's view, a national approach where the Australian government provides leadership and collaborates with state and territory and local jurisdictions is essential. Again, through those previous submissions, you are familiar with the presentations we have made on the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which sees the Commonwealth not necessarily taking the pre-eminent role but playing a role in national leadership so that states and territories and local governments are more collaborative and that their approaches are more consistent, recognising that geography and locational differences require different approaches in certain circumstances.

Given their important role and the change in the environmental and climate conditions now and known to be impacting on Australia, we highlight the following. Planners are often charged with the challenging task of creating and enabling environment for land use management and change, and we will need to ensure they have a deep understanding of the likelihood and consequence of climate change. Planners will be faced with previously unforeseen and increasingly difficult land use and development scenarios. Also, we have enormous pressures from the development industry and private property owners. I think land tenure is going to be a critical issue here if we are faced with a situation where we potentially have to tell private landowners that they cannot develop or that, if they do develop, they face the prospect that their properties will not be insured and that governments cannot take responsibility, cannot subsidise them and cannot build attenuation devices around their property. We are not equipped and we do not necessarily have the planning laws and rules to enable us to say, 'You cannot develop in that location because of property rights.' So there are some very difficult issues about to face local governments in particular but also state governments and potentially the national government.

Planners will be under pressure to manage existing coastal and hinterland areas in new ways in the future which may impact on the way that the community has traditionally used such space and places. Planners will need to be competent to play an important role. That is not a criticism of planners; that is the reality. We are not necessarily competent in all of these areas. Just as with part of the broad section of society, there are some planners who are sceptics as to this whole issue. Planners will need to continue to work with other key sectors and across government to ensure an integrated approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation is achieved. It is important to stress that the issues for coastal communities tend to be on the adaptation side. We know that these are likely impacts, either pent-up ones within what has already taken place or those as to what is likely to occur in the future. So, whilst we focus on adaptation for coastal communities, a clear part of the strategy to prevent an exaggerated issue 100 years from now is continued efforts as to mitigation. But mitigation is not necessarily at a local level for coastal communities; it is at a broader national level.

I think I am stating the obvious when I say communities are underprepared and so planners. Support for and investment in this critical profession are needed. Broadly, I think a better understanding of the profession—and of the valuable role that it can play—is critical as well. PIA agrees with the National Seachange Task Force, which promotes the adoption of a coordinated national approach to managing seachange growth that would involve a commitment by all three levels of government to work collaboratively, to ensure that coastal development is managed and focused on sustainability in coastal communities. Continued research is critical. Some of the feedback we have had—as a result of a partnership with the former Australian Greenhouse Office; we had funding to do seminars around the country with planning professionals—from planning professionals included the critical need for information and data. A lot of that will come out of national government agencies like Geoscience Australia and the

CSIRO. So research is absolutely critical and fundamental, because otherwise planners will be accused of putting in place inappropriate strategies.

PIA has developed a sustainable communities model, which I have mentioned. This model was supported in the recommendations of the House of Representatives sustainable cities inquiry and in the ensuing inquiry into a sustainability charter. We believe that there are still principles within both of those inquiries and their recommendations that are pertinent to issues of planning for coastal communities. Such a program would speed up the response by local communities and by state governments to current threats. The subsidiarity principle should apply with local and/or state governments determining appropriate local action. Initially, Commonwealth funding could be targeted to communities most vulnerable to climate change. Our detailed submission talks about a program of \$10 billion over 10 years by the Commonwealth matched by funding from state and local governments and then leveraging private sector funding. That is all part of the more detailed model contained within the sustainable communities initiative, which was an initiative of the Planning Institute of Australia, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Property Council of Australia.

I come to the summary of key recommendations specifically as to coastal communities and their vulnerability, even though there are other recommendations contained within the detailed submission. These are:

1 The Council of Australian Governments develop a national vision for and approach to the management of our coastline to deliver nationally consistent policies and outcomes ...

These are contained in our submission. They include the following:

- co-ordinated growth management along our coastlines
- identification of priority areas for action
- agreement on national performance indicators and criteria covering environmental, economic, social and governance—

as the basis for assessing success and continued funding—

- appropriate levels of funding and resourcing to local governments and—

regional groups or state governments—

to deliver these outcomes ...

Whilst it is not listed there, I do think that a critical issue is coastal mapping of vulnerable communities. It is happening in isolated instances, either as a result of collaborative efforts between state governments and Geoscience Australia or as a result of efforts by state governments in isolation with individual local governments. PIA thinks it needs to be a national program that produces nationally consistent, uniform datasets as information for planners and communities.

The second key recommendation is:

2 Establish a Coastal Management Unit addressing climate change impacts in a central unit within a Federal Government Department, to co-ordinate and facilitate action on this initiative; which may be best placed within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Services and Local Government. This would assist with the co-ordination of state and local government in areas such as planning, environment, transport and infrastructure ...

The rationale for that is that the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council is notionally the council that has responsibility for planning, even though the Commonwealth does not necessarily have a planning department.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry. Obviously, the opportunity is there for you to read the more detailed submission. We are happy to respond to any questions that you may have.

CHAIR—Did you want to add anything, Di?

Ms Jay—No, I think Neil has done a comprehensive job, so I am happy to respond to questions.

CHAIR—That is fine. Thank you very much, Neil, for your introductory remarks. You mention in your submission that you believe there should be a national vision in terms of protection of our coastline even though you recognise that planning legislation and policies are predominantly a state and local government responsibility. You go on to say that you have:

... approached the ... Government for further support with:

Preparation of national guidelines for planners on climate change adaptation (and mitigation) which would include general principles, tools, case studies, international and national best practice, references and a web site with a link to a recognized climate change web portal.

In your introductory remarks you stress the importance of knowledge, information, data, research capacity and the tools to enable people to make use of that knowledge at a local level. The Department of Climate Change are, as you know, now working to undertake what they refer to as being a 'first pass national coastal assessment', which we understand will be finalised early next year. The minister has also announced her intention to develop an interactive website as a tool to help planners. There are discussions now occurring about the holding of a local government conference some time in the first half of the new year. Would you like to make any comments on the progress of these initiatives? Are they heading in the right direction? What more can and should be done?

Mr Savery—Without wanting to be seen to be political in this, we do congratulate the Australian government on some of the recent initiatives. We have met with officials from the Department of Climate Change and explored some of the initiatives that you have identified, which are certainly going in the right direction and will be very useful to planners. We have indicated to the department that we see that there are collaborative opportunities, to work with the Planning Institute of Australia in helping disseminate information and also to work on new information that we think we could add value to. This would be in a similar way to where we are participating with the federal department of health on Healthy Spaces and Places, as part of addressing issues of obesity and the way that the built environment deals with that. They are

separate issues. So my response is that we are very positive about those initiatives. I think what we are hearing back from our own membership and from the planning profession in general is that that information is not getting out to them quickly enough or they are not necessarily aware of where the sources of information are. We have got a role to play as the national body in advising them as to all of that, and we do that.

I think it is also useful to mention again that, with the global planners network in which we are a participant, some of the information that we believe will come out of those initiatives—and from others that we talk about—will be extremely valuable at an international level. The establishment of the global planners network, ostensibly in the first instance by Australians, the Americans, the British and the Canadians, is to enable those countries that do not have the resource base that we do have to have information—and even though we moan about not having capacity, when you compare ours to others they pale into insignificance. The fact is the sort of information that we are talking about here could also be available to them, even though they would have to adapt it to different environments in sub-Saharan Africa, in countries in Asia and in Bangladesh and those sorts of places.

Ms Jay—I will add a little to that particularly around the issues of materials and guidelines and the adequacy of what is currently being done. The view of the institute broadly—and this is certainly mine and this is certainly Neil's—is that governments have really taken some great strides ahead in terms of looking to address—and to provide some support for a range of professionals and for the community in dealing with—climate change impacts and environmental issues. Certainly, the development of an interactive website gets a big tick; from our point of view that would be fantastic. As for the first pass national coastal assessment, yes, we need that and we need that done in a nationally consistent way, because these issues do not start and stop at state borders.

But what from our perspective members were really seeking when, we had conversations with them through the workshops the AGO funded over 12 months ago, was they wanted real scenario data. They wanted to understand very clearly in their region what the likely scenario was and what the extreme scenario would look like in climate terms in order that they could plan accordingly. Their sense at the moment is that CSIRO, for example, is doing some brilliant work. There is some great work going on in individual universities. They applaud the establishment of the facility at Griffith and the network idea, but where is the material they can identify as directly relevant to them and have confidence in so that they can advise their elected representatives in council, 'These are the likelihoods, these are the consequences, and this is the action we should take.' So in addition to having really robust and reliable regional-based scenarios we need guidelines, case studies and really robust advice on, 'If this is going to happen, you might want to think about these sorts of approaches being taken in your particular region.' That is where we think we have a real role to play.

Neil did mention the healthy places and spaces program. It is a fantastic initiative, with \$700,000 of Commonwealth funding going into that, a partnership between PIA, the Heart Foundation and the Australian Local Government Association. We are doing precisely that. We are building national guidelines for how to create healthier spaces and places. We would love to be able to replicate that in the climate change space, whether that is for coastal communities or more broadly. Clearly coastal communities are where we have a high level of vulnerability, so if that were the target focus at least in the first instance, fantastic. But we really need to get some

traction on this stuff. A lot of the Commonwealth emphasis is in mitigation and big picture stuff around the CPRS, quite appropriately, but there are a range of complementary strategies that need to be undertaken. Complementary strategies in the built environment are vital, in our view. They will actually reduce the cost of carbon trading if they had done the right way around buildings. But we also need these sorts of strategies which are about dealing with the elephant in the room. Everyone is talking mitigation, mitigation, mitigation, but what we need to start addressing right now is adaptation as well, and these sorts of tools are critical to that adaptation effort.

Mr Savery—Something I often talk about in national forums is that the enemy of planning systems and therefore for planners is uncertainty. Everyone is looking for certainty. If we do not have these scenarios and we do not have greater levels of consistency of approach, even though there will be local variations, then planners are constantly faced with the situation where one community or one developer will say, ‘Well, it is uncertain what you actually want and why is it that over there my competitor can do that but over here you are telling me I have to do that?’ It makes it very difficult for planners to be able to apply their trade.

CHAIR—In relation to that, linking in the comments Di has just made to your earlier consideration of the impact of the lack of skills and workforce issues, what we are finding even among states is a wide variation on how they are handling this issue. But when you get down to the level of local government, in many smaller communities they just do not have the expertise to draw on, despite the best intentions. You seem to argue in your submission that a regional-based approach and regional plans are probably the way to go. How do you see the possibility of that occurring? Would it be through the existing natural resource management committees or the catchment management authorities? How would you see that being able to be given effect?

Ms Jay—The NRMs have certainly had an interesting role to play and they have certainly historically been looking at building closer relationships with planners. From our perspective that has been a great opportunity to think more broadly in terms of managing natural resources as part of the overall picture of taking a holistic approach to planning. However, in our submission we have talked about an alternative in governance terms and I might just take you to that issue of governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone.

What we have suggested is that, in order to get those sorts of consistent approaches, the Council of Australian Governments, as Neil said in the opening remarks, needs to take a coordinating role. It needs to be very clear that we need a vision and a consistent approach across jurisdictions and to look to working with the Council of Australian Governments to establish what that mechanism is going to be. We have said that we should be establishing a coastal management unit to address climate change—so, within the federal government, an entity that has a charter to work together with the jurisdictions to ensure that the outcomes we are looking for are achieved.

We have also said that we should use the sort of mechanism we talked about in providing evidence to the sustainable cities inquiry. That would mean that we would have regional clusters of local governments, which would work together to address the issues at a regional level, and that those regional strategies would be developed with some incentive funding being provided by the Commonwealth in order that they could do that. In other words, the Commonwealth would use its fiscal capacity—and in this instance it would probably turn out to be an

appropriate form of fiscal stimulus, I might say, given the current economic conditions—to provide fiscal support to regional clusters of local governments in order to develop specific regional climate responses. That would mean that, where you have one planner or perhaps no planner in a particular locality but perhaps two in another, you could bring that expertise together so that those groups could work at a regional level to develop strategies.

Newcastle university has been doing some interesting work with a commercial partner, but the bit that has really captured my attention is the fact that they have identified 22 climate zones in Australia. We are a vast nation. The issues in Far North Queensland are different to those in the far corner of southern Western Australia. That is where we need to be putting our emphasis. The work of CSIRO, as I have mentioned before, is fabulous but what does it really mean? It is a question of ‘What’s in it for me?’ for local planners in their local communities—that is, translating it into a regional context.

CHAIR—Are you able to forward the information from Newcastle university you referred to. I do not think we have had any submissions about that and it would be very useful.

Ms Jay—They have been looking more at particular built form and how you might optimise sustainable housing, given the particular climate zone, and less at this big picture level of looking at regional climate change strategy, but conceptually—

CHAIR—Conceptually it sounds interesting.

Ms Jay—it is the notion of: ‘There are 22. These are the scenarios in those 22.’ Again, it goes to the issue that Neil was referring to of providing a modicum of certainty in a very uncertain world.

Mr Savery—I would make the observation—and there is a risk in saying this; it is a personal professional judgement—that I do not think traditional governance models are necessarily what we are going to need in dealing with climate change down the track. I do not think they are necessarily going to work for us. An example of an alternative might be better aligning local government arrangements and overlaying common boundaries with natural resource management and catchment bodies and economic development boards. This might mean, in effect, amalgamation—not forced, but the equivalent of amalgamating three councils in a region that do not have the capacity in their own right to deal with these issues. At the moment they all tend to occupy different geographic boundaries that compete with each other. In fact, what they need to be doing is working together.

Dr WASHER—I agree with everything you have said but, on a slightly different tangent, I have always found population a curiosity. We have, as you know, about 86 per cent of the population living within 50 kilometres off the coast, by road at least. Sustainability becomes an issue. I think sustainability is the No. 1 thing. What do you think we should be doing about this nationally? Can you think of any ideas? Obviously, we are stretching the infrastructure, not only in hardware such as roads but in doctors and dentists for the ageing population et cetera. What, nationally, should we be doing about this—or should we just let it randomly continue?

Mr Savery—No. I think the obvious first part of an answer to that is to refer you to the Planning Institute’s Sustainable Communities initiative of four years ago, which called upon the

Commonwealth to establish a national urban policy that we felt was needed and still believe is needed. I think I am right in saying that we were disappointed that there was never a response to the *Sustainable cities* report or the Sustainability Charter, because we believe both those documents contain some very significant principles that would in part go to addressing the question you are raising.

I know it is a difficult subject, but, ultimately, I think governments need to be looking at population policies at the national and local levels. It is a very difficult area because of demographic change, economic implications et cetera. Last year I was watching an ABC program that I can never remember the title of and saw the Business Council of Australia arguing for an Australian population of 100 million by the end of this century to deliver economic benefits and the welfare that purportedly comes from that growth. Then the environment group was saying, 'We're beyond our carrying capacity now'—Professor Tim Flannery would argue that we are beyond our carrying capacity now. A lot of that is, of course, to do with the establishment of these major urban centres, which are the source of 75 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions.

However, having again just come back from China, it was interesting at the World Urban Forum to hear a number of presenters talk about urbanity potentially being the solution. It is not necessarily the construction and operation of cities; it is the behaviour and patterns of consumption of individuals within cities that is critical, and therefore strategies around pricing of energy, pricing of water, education, and incentives and subsidies to do things differently are potentially part of the mix. But your question is a huge one.

Dr WASHER—I will just mention that I asked Philip Ruddock, whom I happen to sit next to now in the House what he thought the optimum population of this country would be. He actually had thought about it and he said 25 million. He thought it would naturally pan out at that, which is a bit of interesting feedback, because of economic downturns and things that plateau out. But no government has really had the courage to say what it should be, and it does eventuate that these coastal populations are the bulk of it, so I think we have to start thinking about it.

Mr Savery—Particularly with the demographic change that is taking place, absolutely.

Ms Jay—In terms of predicting optimal populations for Australia, it is probably a little bit beyond PIA's capacity to provide an adequate response to that question. It is an appropriate question to be asking, there is no doubt, but the likes of CSIRO and Barney Foran and all of the issues associated with his report of some years ago, which was endeavouring to do that, probably indicate what a fraught area trying to make any predictions is. That said, I think we all know what the shape of our future population looks like based on current demographics, and with the skills shortages that we do have clearly it is critical to augment our small level of domestic population growth with immigration. Certainly from a planning point of view, when we are looking at vacancy rates of 20 per cent in professionals skills and capabilities in a local government area at any point in time, and up to 67 per cent in paraplanning support areas based on recent research that we have done in South Australia, skilling up the existing population, particularly in the vocational areas and in the professional areas, is key to our future. Certainly without those we are really hard pressed to establish a sustainable future for ourselves.

Mrs IRWIN—First I would like to thank you for your submission and your opening statement. Actually, in your opening statement and in response to questions from the chair you covered quite a few of the questions that I was going to ask you. But I am interested in page 5 of your submission, where you state:

An example of a state-wide coastal plan is the 2007 winner of the PIA National Award for Planning Excellence.

You went on to state that:

This Coastal Spaces Landscape Assessment Study undertaken by Planisphere for the Victorian Department of Sustainability ... may be a model for that can be translated into assessing environmental and climate change vulnerability.

Can you just tell the committee more about this study and the benefits of the Victorian coastal plan. How might this model be translated into assessing environmental and climate change vulnerability?

Ms Jay—Clearly, we consider it to be an excellent piece of work because we gave it an award in our national awards.

Mrs IRWIN—Correct.

Ms Jay—I am sure Planisphere will be delighted to hear their name being read out in the parliament and appearing in *Hansard*. It really is an excellent piece of work. Essentially, they allocated a value to various attributes along the coastline of Victoria, whether they were environmental attributes or built form attributes, so that there was a system of determining which areas were more vulnerable, less vulnerable, more appropriate for preservation and conservation, where you might develop and where you might be more tentative in doing so. In a nutshell, it provides a framework for decision making, which clearly as planners we would applaud. I can certainly provide committee members with a copy of that report.

Mrs IRWIN—That would be wonderful. Thank you.

CHAIR—We will be having submissions when we go to Victoria from the Victorian government. We might chase up someone from the Department of Sustainability and Environment to present there as well.

Ms MARINO—Thank you for coming. I appreciate it. You touched on agriculture and food production. I would be interested to know whether some of your consideration of umbrella planning includes looking closely at appropriate soil types and the most productive food sourcing use for that and how you would see managing that within local councils within the existing planning strategies and limitations. Given that we have some real issues with food shortages ahead, how would you see that one working?

Mr Savery—I will let Di come back to what she was just whispering in my ear, but I would just like to state upfront that food, water and energy security are paramount issues for planners. With the recent string of metropolitan planning that has occurred around Australia for all of the major metropolitan centres, one of the key issues that has typically been identified is land suitability and land capability. So you actually are not undertaking a very effective planning

process as a planner if you do not include those features in your analysis for the spatial planning of cities. Basically, what you are doing is going out and looking at where the appropriate land use should be based on the productive nature of land.

I will just use the ACT as an example because we have just done the Canberra special plan in the last four years. There are significant areas of Canberra that have been ruled out from urban development because they would be more suitable for alternative uses. Not that Canberra is obviously the food bowl of Australia, but there are some very significant either environmental or agriculturally productive parcels of land. I know that the same approach has been applied in the metropolitan planning of all other cities. The difficulty is the inevitable population pressure to expand. Look at the western corridor of Sydney and the south-western and south-eastern corridors of Melbourne. Typically it is all western expansion of course, except in Western Australia. It is going into those peri-urban areas. It is going into our rural hinterlands, which are fed by diminishing river systems. Therefore, the ability for us to sustain good agricultural practice is increasingly difficult.

The other issue that arises is the increased value of land—

Ms MARINO—Very much.

Mr Savery—on the fringes of cities. That makes it harder for farmers to remain on the land. I know that some of the international responses have looked at that particularly. I have not got the solution but I know that it is a critical area of being looked at in Europe, in particular, where they are trying to retain farmers on the land immediately around cities. London traditionally has had its green belt. It is always under pressure, but they have held fast to their green belt not only to provide the lungs around London but also to try to create a buffer between it and the rural hinterland beyond.

Ms MARINO—Some years ago the Department of Agriculture and others in Western Australia identified the need for perhaps around 20,000 hectares more of food-producing land on the Swan coastal plain. How you do that and isolate it in a planning sense is the challenge for regional councils.

Mr Savery—I think you have already part-answered it. Planning is the vehicle through which you do it, but we need to understand the enormous pressures that planning systems and local governments come under to undermine those processes.

Ms Jay—I think there is an interesting model in Western Australia with the Western Australian Planning Commission. We were talking about governance earlier and Neil was talking about the difficulties individual local governments have in dealing with these sorts of issues. The Western Australian Planning Commission is the most enduring government structure that sits effectively between state government as a statutory entity and local government, with a capacity to forward plan in terms of land management and land use. It has been a purchaser of land and a preserver of land for future use. It is interesting conceptually to think about that model and how that actually provides in many senses a more robust approach to managing the issues that Neil is referring to in terms of growth management, peri-urban areas, how do you put bounds around your cities and manage them tightly in order not to erode the preservation of those sorts of important food bowls.

Ms MARINO—Given that, inasmuch as your planning departments are concerned, in WA one of the things I was interested in at the time was that there were no dedicated agricultural representatives on the planning commission. One of the issues to manage this may well be that this is part of the organisational structure of those particular bodies as well to maintain that representation and focus, that that may be part of this as well. How would you see that.?

Ms Jay—I think that is potentially one solution. We are saying it is increasingly an important issue as our cities grow and the footprint of those cities grows, to be thinking in those sorts of terms. Clearly that is the parliament's view as well because there is an inquiry at the moment underway to which we have also made a submission about those very issues. We would be happy to provide this committee with a copy of that brief submission as well.

Ms MARINO—I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr Savery—I would make the comment in relation to state government planning departments as opposed to local governments that typically they are almost central government type agencies. Even though they do not sit in premier and cabinet department, they are coordinating bodies because planners refer matters to different government agencies, so if you have a department of agriculture they will typically be brought into the conversation. It is interesting to note that in the last four years Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and I think one another have introduced urban growth boundaries into their planning systems as a very deliberate attempt to say there is a limit to where these cities will grow, in large part recognising that they are infringing on critical peri-urban areas. But even having done that, I know South Australia is under enormous pressure to move that boundary to allow for more urban land to be incorporated. You can use your best endeavours through the planning systems to put these mechanisms in place—

Ms MARINO—I am aware of the pressures. That is why I am asking the questions.

CHAIR—Before we conclude this morning, are there any other pertinent matters that you have raised in your submission that you would like to particularly direct the committee's attention to? I know that you are suggesting an expansion of the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council by the incorporation of the two federal ministers, which seems to be a proposition that has merit. That is on the last page.

Ms Jay—We would reinforce that point from the submission. There are perhaps a couple of things that I would like to mention and Neil may also have a couple in closing. One is to commend to you the recent work done by the Sustainable Built Environment Council, of which PIA is a member, a piece of work which quantified greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and looked at the abatement curve and the potential cost of abatement. Twenty-three per cent of greenhouse gases are produced by buildings in Australia and this is the first piece of national definitive research on this issue.

Consequently, a further piece of work has been done by ASBEC that identifies a series of policy options that might be adopted to rapidly achieve abatement from buildings through energy efficiency. The cost of that is negligible. One key policy option proposed is accelerated depreciation or green depreciation. In the current economic environment that is a tool which can be used for fiscal stimulus in the construction industry, so it has a second benefit in the current

climate. It would be an incentive for early retrofitting of buildings to make them more energy efficient.

On ASBEC's estimations that could reduce GHG from 60 megatons to eight megatons. That is not an inconsequential contribution. It would very effectively augment the impacts of the CPRS, where we are relying heavily on price alone. The Prime Minister mentioned a second plank. We are saying that the second plank should actually be a greening fund for buildings, green depreciation and white tradable certificates for buildings.

Moving on from that which is part of PIA's passion, ASBEC is now taking on a new piece of research. It is looking more broadly at urban environments and looking at what reductions in greenhouse gas emissions can be achieved through changes in transport mode and mix as well as urban structure and form. That piece of modelling will be done by the Centre for International Economics through ASBEC, as the previous work was. It will be national. Once we have got some baseline data, we will be able to do scenarios—if we change the structure of this city or community, what will the ramifications be in a change in emissions? This is on the mitigation side. Today I think we are talking much more about adaptation, likely impacts and how we deal with them, but often the two can become blurred in the middle. I just want to commend that research to you and offer copies of those reports to the committee.

The second thing is not to lose sight in this context of Infrastructure Australia and the Major Cities Unit. We have recommended to both of those bodies and to Minister Albanese that the work of this committee in the *Sustainable cities* report and the sustainable charter potentially provide a framework for a funding model that would allow sustainable cities and communities to be developed around the infrastructure investments by IA. A similar sort of model to the urban action plans or what we are proposing here in terms of coastal action plans could be applied by the government to really leverage that investment that is going to be made out of IA. I know the interests of some members of this committee extend to those issues.

CHAIR—You would know that Peter Newman was appointed to the governing body of Infrastructure Australia.

Ms Jay—Indeed, and what a fabulous appointment that was.

CHAIR—So at least the issues of sustainability will get some airplay in the deliberations of that committee.

Mr Savery—We are also very pleased that a very senior planner has been appointed to head up the Major Cities Unit—Dorte Ekelund.

CHAIR—Yes. I understand a woman with an Illawarra background and who worked in WA.

Mr Savery—Originally, yes. She worked here in Canberra and most recently she was the deputy director-general in WA.

Ms Jay—And Sue Holliday, who you may know, has also been appointed Chair of the Built Environment Industry Innovation Council. Planners feel like it is Christmas. It is tremendous to see that.

Mr Savery—Di has picked up on the point I wanted to raise but did not mention in response to your question. Emphasised again and again in the conferences in China was the critical relationship between good planning outcomes and coordinated strategic infrastructure investment and planned infrastructure that take the opportunity to value add with that infrastructure investment. We are at this critical point where we are considering infrastructure when trying to do something about our economies and responding to the financial crisis. At the same time we could value add to a response to climate change issues through infrastructure that is going to be there for the next 50 or 100 years.

Ms Jay—Unplanned, you can have a 50 per cent loss on your infrastructure—that was some data that was quoted at a conference in China. It is a critical issue to plan well.

CHAIR—Thank you both for attending the hearing today. We always welcome the input from the Planning Institute of Australia. Over the past several years the policy development that has occurred in these areas has relied a lot on the wisdom that we have heard from your institute and from the written submissions. We do value the work and the input that you give to this committee and other committees you are involved with. We look forward to your continued input into the future.

Resolved (on motion by **Dr Washer**, seconded by **Ms Marino**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 11.45 am