Save Our Brisbane Suburbs

Part of the Australia wide Save Our Suburbs network

Factsheet #8

IPA and Infrastructure Charges … an invitation and incentive to demolish?

While Queensland's Integrated Planning Act (IPA) was initially heralded as a new approach to planning and "growth management", it is increasingly being seen to have reduced if not eliminated submission, objection and appeal rights available to local community interest groups and individuals under previous legislation. In fact, IPA increasingly emerges as a pro-development "growth promoter" rather than a planning framework. It seems that any development is now encouraged and protected as long as it has government support.

Large projects eg Lang Park, are subject to public scrutiny but were called in and protected from appeal by the state. The result? While construction is well under way, supportive infrastructure so important to local residents and businesses and to patrons has not been subject to scrutiny. Transport arrangements remain completely protected … in an era of "transparent" government.

At the other end of the scale, residents now have no submission, objection or appeal rights at all over what happens on adjacent sites. With private certification and reduced staff for enforcement of building assessment and regulatory compliance, there is an alarming increase in "illegal" buildings, ie buildings that should not have been built … buildings built too close to boundaries, buildings too high, buildings with supposed character value being "protected", similar buildings being approved for demolition or removal, sites in flood zones being filled and then built on thereby far exceeding height restrictions, illegal demolition and clearing of trees … the list goes on.

All of these examples and there are many more only confirm the failure of IPA to provide the community and its citizens with a chance "to have a say" … to take part in responsible negotiation of development to "fit" the neighbourhood and its expectations. It is as if governments don't care what neighbourhoods think. If governments did care, then means for effective submissions, objections and appeals would be provided or reinstated … to balance the bias now so much favouring development and "growth promotion" rather than "management" of "growth".

However, a more onerous outcome of IPA is emerging. Relatively high municipal rates are levied by local government and high land taxes by the state government for community services provision. Planning legislation provides the opportunity to require various contributions from developers for both reconstruction of community assets damaged during construction and for provision of additional services due to increased demand (eg more traffic, more water, electricity, sewerage, parks, schools etc). But IPA links recovery of the future costs of provision of these services to development thus providing a new source of current income and thus an even greater incentive to local authorities and the state planning framework (IPA) to encourage new development … everywhere, not just "growth management" but rampant development promotion.

Not surprising them to discover that, while developers are no doubt being required to contribute more than they did in the past, they and their developments are being heavily subsidised by government failure to assess, control and enforce development from initial concept to completion and beyond. But it is the local community that actually provides the subsidy by loss of amenity and character, irreplaceable but increasingly eroded by planning legislation where people have no say. Further, inappropriate development reduces property values and acts as a disincentive to community and neighbourhood protection … just what the governments and the developers seek!