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PUBLIC INQUIRY REQUIRED FOR OUT OF CONTROL PLANNING CHANGES

As the financial year came to a close it was becoming clear that the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) was experiencing difficulty in sustaining the technical and financial burden of the monstrosity it had unleashed in the form of the Planning and Design Code.

The opaqueness, complexity and confusion hidden within the 62,000 page Code has been an insulting indictment of government credibility and failed public engagement. It has become an embarrassing millstone of bad Government policy and bureaucratic ineptitude, hanging around the neck of Planning Minister Stephan Knoll.

The ill-conceived and inordinately complicated e-planning platform designed to implement and maintain the Code has been developed at great expense and difficulty by DPTI, despite much simpler and cheaper options being available interstate. And now, unsurprisingly, the Minister has run out of money to continue this attenuated and ill-fated planning 'reform'.

And so it was, in parliament on 18 June, that the Minister varied Section 25 of the Regulations of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act (2016)* to allow him to plunder the Planning and Development Fund in order to prop-up his moribund planning process.

He ignored the fact that this Fund, subsidised by a levy on the building industry, was established to provide for the creation of open space within urban infill developments.

So, here we have a Minister, with carriage of a proposed new planning system, predicated on crowded infill and high rise over-densification, plundering the fund designed to address the consequences of vanishing green space for more of his bureaucratic misadventures.

This latest manoeuvre again raises issues about the probity and appropriateness of the Government's intention to implement the Code in the face of the serious concerns about community engagement, transparency and accountability.

14 000 South Australians have already signed a petition to the Parliament calling for a deferment of the implementation of the Planning and Design Code and an independent review of the governance and operation of the State Planning Commission.

The public deserves to know details about the financial management of the Code - budget allocations, expenditures and overruns - and a realistic indication of timelines and outcomes, in particular relating to the troubled e-planning system.

Until this information is available, the Parliament must sanction the Minister for his ineptitude and his Department for inefficiency. The Government must call a pause in the implementation of the new planning system until there is a formal review or a public or parliamentary inquiry to explain how the much vaunted planning 'reforms' have gone so wrong and how much they have already cost the community.

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