

**SUBMISSION TO NSW MINISTER OF PLANNING IN RELATION
TO THE WHITE PAPER & EXPOSURE BILLS ON
' A NEW PLANNING SYSTEM FOR NSW'**

Partnership Model: The New Subregional Planning Board

Submitted by Andrew C Fraser
B.Econ., Post Grad.Cert. Environ Econ.,
Master of Environmental Planning

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Introduction

I was delighted to read about *The Partnership Model; The New Subregional Planning Board* in the relevant White Paper & Exposure Bills. To me it marks the first step in winding back the destructive power struggle and 'blame game' that has historically marked relations between State and local governments on planning issues.

As an ANU economist and recently qualified Master of Environmental Planning graduate, I have studied 'best practice' planning systems in France & the EU in relation to the NSW system (see attached papers). Based on this research, I can confidently say the 'partnership model' between central and local government is the key to efficient & effective planning.

The purpose of this submission is to suggest how the initiative your department has taken in advocating the 'partnership model' may be improved to ensure it is a true workable partnership between State, Federal and Local government on the one hand and the community on the other.

An Effective & Balanced Partnership

In my submission, the Department of Planning partnership proposal is intimately tied up with the recommendations of the 'independent' panel on council amalgamations. As you would be aware the Panel recently proposed that many councils be amalgamated, mainly for financial reasons. In the first place as an economist I am unconvinced that council amalgamation is the only or best way to achieve financial viability for smaller councils. North Sydney and Mosman councils with which I have had much to do, balance their books and their financial management is admirable. But more importantly the proposal for the State government to forcibly amalgamate councils is fundamentally undemocratic, problematic and against the community interest. As an unpaid community volunteer on both North Sydney Council Sustainable Transport Committee and the North Shore Pedestrian and Bicycle Regional Committee, I can tell you I would immediately resign if the forced amalgamation proposal was to go through. Volunteerism that councils depend on to serve the community interest would disintegrate and the whole exercise would be totally counterproductive.

An effective and balanced planning partnership depends on there being an 'equal' relationship between State and Local government in the proposed Subregional partnerships. This is to ensure that both parties in the partnership have equal bargaining power. So long as the State government has all the constitutional and revenue raising powers there will never be a true partnership and the Department of Planning partnership proposal will fail.

In my submission the subregional council representation on the proposed Planning Board need to be harmonized with the subregional groupings under ROCS. Secondly these subregional groupings should be incorporated (but not amalgamated) so they are eligible for direct Federal funding. I note that some ROCS subregions such as the Sydney Coastal Councils group Inc are already

incorporated and this facilitates Federal funding to the subregion. Economically an incorporated councils subregion based on a 'federation' model can achieve economies of scale and benefit from specialization while at the same time preserving the discrete and unique community identity of each council. In this regard the proposed referendum question on direct Federal funding to councils is highly apposite.

I would appreciate the Department of Planning building on their partnership model for the new Subregional Planning Board by coordinating with the Premiers Department, ROCS and the Federal government to achieve the objectives proposed above.

Yours sincerely

Andrew C Fraser
Community Member
North Sydney Council
Sustainable Transport
Reference Group