

Property Council backs urban sprawl

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The Property Council has called on the State Government to rethink its approach to Perth's development, claiming that urban sprawl can be just as environmentally sound as inner-city apartment towers.

Joe Lenzo, the executive director for the developers' lobby group, has sparked a war of words with Planning Minister Alannah MacTiernan by describing the Government's 25-year plan to contain the majority of new homes in Perth's existing built-up area as unrealistic.

He said he agreed with the overall idea of Network City, which aims to create more urban-style hubs throughout Perth, but he could not see urban infill projects taking the place of greenfields development on the city fringes.

Ms MacTiernan immediately fired back by saying the Property Council had missed the point because planning was not simply a case of the suburbs versus the inner-city. She said Network City was about creating better-planned outer suburbs as well as more homes within existing ones.

The debate was sparked by a report released by the national Property Council's residential development arm, which claimed that targets for infill development across Australian capital cities were doomed to fail because of lack of



Joe Lenzo: Challenge.

support, high cost and scarcity of suitable land.

"Even though State governments promote infill targets in their regional plans, there is nothing requiring local councils to support them," the report stated. "In fact, trying to gain approval for a medium or high-density housing development in an existing area usually provokes the most vehement of community objections.

"It's NIMBYism with Viagra and local councils usually respond to those concerns by blocking the development application."

The Property Council said there were an increasing number of studies showing that inner-city housing

was not necessarily more environmentally sustainable. The report pointed to Australian Conservation Foundation research which the Council claimed showed that high-density inner city areas produced higher per capita greenhouse emissions and had bigger "eco footprints" than outer suburbs. This was because inner-city addresses were home to a higher percentage of wealthy people, who consumed more resources.

Ms MacTiernan said the findings were simplistic and motivated by the development industry's self-interest. The council's claim about environmental sustainability was flawed because it did not compare like with like — rich households from the outer suburbs were not compared with rich households from the inner suburbs.

Ms MacTiernan pointed out that, while land sales on Perth's fringes had all but ground to a halt, apartments close to the city continued to sell well. "This is not something that is being imposed on an unwilling community," she said. "The reality is there is a huge market for people to live in more urban environments."

She said the point of Network City was to develop urban nodes throughout the suburbs in areas like Armadale and Cockburn Central, not just in exclusive addresses such as Subiaco and East Perth.