

# Public Statement

## **CORRUPTION VULNERABILITIES IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

12 June 2024

### **Statement by the Hon. Ann Vanstone KC Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption**

The Commission recently commenced a project to advance our understanding of corruption vulnerabilities within the planning and development system.

Planning and development are complex areas of public administration where corruption weaknesses can easily materialise. The planning system is often contentious and adversarial in nature, with high levels of discretionary decision making and subjective assessment. The influencing of planning officials on even minor amendments to planning controls and allowances can have substantial effects on the value of land and developments. These factors increase the opportunities and incentives for impropriety among developers and planning officials, with interstate integrity agencies uncovering many examples of corrupt conduct. Failures of supervision, transparency and controls within planning systems have been found to have enabled such conduct.

The Commission has had some exposure to the corruption threats involved in the state's planning and development activities. Various complaints and reports of poor conduct within the sector have led to several corruption investigations. Nonetheless, a full appreciation of risks involved in the planning and development regulatory landscape has proved elusive.

To address this, the Commission recently undertook a wide ranging strategic assessment of the corruption pressure points in the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*. We now seek further information to test identified weaknesses and areas amenable to exploitation.

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It is opportune to review and assess the state's planning regime. The *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* fully commenced in March 2021, representing a comprehensive reform of the state's planning regime, instruments, and decision makers. The scheme is now settled, and it is appropriate to assess its integrity. The planning and development environment is also seeing a marked increase in activity in response to housing stock pressures, activity likely to accelerate in the coming years. Along with that will come greater risk of corruption.

As the Commission advances its strategic intelligence project, relevant observations and recommendations will be conveyed to stakeholders. If aspects of the scheme are assessed as vulnerable to corruption but inadequately controlled, consideration will be given to initiating an evaluation of those functions under section 40 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2013*.

Should public officers or members of the public wish to share insights or observations on corruption risks in planning, or require more information, please email the Commission's prevention team: [prevention@icac.sa.gov.au](mailto:prevention@icac.sa.gov.au)

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