



• **SARAH MACOUN**

• PARTNER - PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT, HOPGOODGANIM LAWYERS

## • **Transforming community perceptions through transparency**

- WOULD THE COMMUNITY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD DEVELOPMENT
- ACTIVITY AND DENSIFICATION BE DIFFERENT IF THERE WAS A GREATER
- UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTRIBUTION DEVELOPMENT MAKES TO THE
- PROVISION OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE?

Would members of the community so readily oppose particular development if greater transparency surrounding infrastructure charges made it possible to easily establish the tangible benefits delivered by a project?

Established in 2014, the Institute's Industry Leaders Research Group (ILRG) undertakes leading edge and independent research in relation to key industry issues, including community attitudes to population growth and density. In 2017, the ILRG's qualitative research focused on community engagement and consultation. Significantly, the 2017 research revealed a limited understanding of infrastructure charging among the community driven largely by a lack of transparency in relation to the collection and spending of infrastructure charges.

A proposal for a shopping centre or high-rise development that might be perceived negatively by immediate neighbours may be more palatable if the community could readily establish that a portion of the infrastructure charges levied on the development would be spent to resolve local traffic issues or provide a piece of critical local infrastructure. Such an approach would facilitate a deeper understanding of the ability for projects to deliver benefits to a locality that may be delayed or not otherwise occur absent to the development. Not only through contribution to the urban form, but through the provision of infrastructure that improves the community's wellbeing.

While presently the planning legislation requires 'infrastructure charges registers' to be made available for inspection and purchase, those registers are not required to account for infrastructure charges at a suburb level, or provide detailed information regarding how, when, and where the charges are spent.

In light of the research findings, the Institute wrote to the State Government in September 2017 advocating for greater transparency to improve the public's understanding of how the infrastructure charging framework operates. In November 2017, the Deputy Premier (and then Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) announced that, if re-elected, the government would deliver improved transparency through requiring local government and distributor-retailers to publish information about:

- the total amount of infrastructure charges revenue collected
- the total amount of infrastructure charges revenue spent for each infrastructure network (water supply, sewerage, transport, stormwater, parks, and land for community purposes)
- the total amount of unspent charges accumulated over previous financial years.

This information is to be published suburb by suburb, as well as aggregated across each local government area.


In making the announcement, the Deputy Premier noted that residents had consistently raised concerns over the lack of transparency around how councils distribute the millions of dollars levied from developers that are meant to go towards important community projects like parks and local roads.

This commitment by the State Government represents yet another concrete example of the improvements that can be achieved when the Institute's advocacy is based on a solid foundation of independent and qualitative research. It remains to be seen whether greater transparency around infrastructure charges leads to better community understanding and a greater appreciation of the benefits that

The Institute wrote to the State Government in September 2017 advocating for greater transparency.

development can deliver to communities. However, the ILRG's research, and indeed, the Deputy Premier's own experience suggests that will be the case.

While the timetable for proposed amendments is unknown at this stage, the Institute will advocate for a timely implementation of the State Government's commitment, given the growth pressures facing the region. /e



**J&P RICHARDSON INDUSTRIES PTY LTD**

**Specialising in Electrical Distribution**

- Electrical Reticulation
- Design & Construction Packages consisting of Firm Price Offer & provision of Energex Bonds
- Design & Installation of NBN Pit & Pipe
- Street Lighting & Traffic Signals
- EMF Reports

**Electrical Contractors & Engineers**  
Established in 1958 - Safety and Quality  
Completed on time and on budget  
[www.jpr.com.au](http://www.jpr.com.au)

Phone: (07) 3271 2911 All Hours  
Fax: (07) 3271 3623 Email: [jpr@jpr.com.au](mailto:jpr@jpr.com.au)  
114 Campbell Avenue Wacol Brisbane QLD 4076