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## **DAPs provide certainty and fairness in approvals process**

In recent months there has been a revival of the debate over the role and fairness of Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) in relation to the development approvals process.

Therefore, I thought it timely to revisit the role of DAPs and the important part they play in ensuring we have a fair and consistent decision-making process.

DAPs are a panel comprised of independent technical experts and local government representatives which are appointed to determine some development applications made under existing local and regional planning schemes.

An application for a development project worth more than \$7 million must go to a DAP for approval, but an applicant with a development project valued between \$3 million and \$7 million may choose to have it determined by a DAP or the local council.

The panel's composition provides a balance between the local knowledge of elected councillors and the technical expertise of the independent members in determining significant development applications.

This means that representatives on a DAP can offer opinions and advice based on both technical and local knowledge, while providing a level of transparency and consistency with regards to decisions on projects across local areas.

Importantly, all members of a DAP must declare any conflict of interest in relation to applications that come before them and remove themselves from the panel if required. This is a vital aspect of the DAP process and ensures that vested interests do not play a role in the decision-making process. It is also important to understand DAPs are required to make decisions based on existing local town-planning schemes and associated policies. That is why it is essential for local councils to ensure they regularly update their local planning schemes, given they set the strategic framework for all decisions for the area and provide the certainty stakeholders are looking for.

More often than not, where issues arise in relation to a DAP decision, it is because a local scheme has not been updated or amended in line with the changing expectations of the local community and general growth and evolution of the urban landscape. It is critical that planning schemes are kept up to date to avoid an adhoc approach to development proposals. If schemes are up to date, then development applications will be assessed fairly and equitably against those requirements.

This clear and transparent development approvals process is essential to ensuring the best long-term outcomes for local communities and the sustainable growth of Perth into the future.