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EPA decision opens Mandogalup land to potential residential development

A recent assessment decision from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) regarding land in Mandogalup provides an excellent example of the importance of ensuring government decision making is based on sound evidence, long-term planning goals and community aspirations.

The EPA released advice last month that ended a long-running controversy over a proposed 1.5km non-residential buffer zone to the Alcoa residue storage areas in Mandogalup, which is located in the southern Perth metropolitan corridor.

The previous Liberal Government had intended to extend the buffer surrounding Alcoa's residue storage area in Mandogalup, based on calls from big industry bodies including Alcoa and the Kwinana Industries Council (KIC).

The idea of the buffer was based on the potential for dust impacts in the area that were completely unfounded and not based on any sort of scientific evidence. In fact, EPA has advised that any emissions should be contained onsite where possible by Alcoa in order to limit any impingement on residential development.

Calls for the buffer were made without consideration of the severe impact it would have on future residential land supply in the area by sterilising up to 300 hectares of what is potentially prime residential land with the capacity to deliver approximately 4300 homes in an area well serviced by public transport and amenities.

The EPA has now conducted a rigorous scientific assessment of potential health and amenity impacts in the area and concluded that over most of East and South East Mandogalup, the air quality is in no way a cause for concern, and a 1.5km buffer is not required.

It is important to note that the land in question has been proposed for rezoning to urban since 2006 by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and is also earmarked for future housing under the WAPC-endorsed Jandakot District Structure Plan. Therefore, it is land that has been recognised as future residential supply for over a decade.

UDIA is hopeful that, with the evidence-based decision from the EPA, urban rezoning in the area can progress quickly so that the broader community can benefit from the provision of more affordable land in a location that is well equipped for residential living.

More broadly, UDIA is firmly of the belief that measures such as buffers should only be based on rigorous, evidence-based scientific and technical assessments to determine the nature and extent of any potential impacts and ensure that decisions take into consideration overarching plans for the future of these areas.