



EDITORIAL Mark Beyer

Why say no to Freo plan?

PREMIER Alan Carpenter has left many people confused and frustrated by his blanket rejection of the ambitious island development proposal announced last week for North Fremantle.

Just when Perth seemed to have grown up a little bit and was embracing city building concepts, like the Swan foreshore development, a world-class sporting stadium and the East Perth museum, Mr Carpenter, along with Attorney-General and local MP Jim McGinty, have instantly dismissed the Fremantle proposal.

This raises two questions.

First, why did they see fit to reject the concept so quickly and forcefully?

Second, does the project have merit?

City Vision's Ken Adam made an astute observation when he was interviewed on the ABC's Stateline last Friday.

He said there were two types of projects in WA – those put forward by the government, which gain the requisite support, and those put forward by others, which never gain backing.

The history of the Swan foreshore development certainly supports this contention.

The state government was cool on all proposals for foreshore development until it came up with its own plan, and now it wonders why it hasn't gained fulsome backing from everybody else.

The North Port Quay proposal is extremely ambitious, and includes the development of 1,200 private boat pens and 1,000 public boat pens.

This would help to address the acute shortage of boat pens currently arising in Perth.

Boating is a pastime enjoyed

by Western Australians from all walks of life, and the current shortage of pens cuts across the board, not just for the very rich with their obscenely large and ostentatious boats.

Fremantle Ports chief executive Kerry Sanderson says the development could compromise the smooth operation of the harbour.

No doubt it would create added challenges, but hasn't Perth experienced a big increase in recreational boating in that area anyway?

And isn't that likely to increase, irrespective of whether this development proceeds?

Fremantle Ports has been dealing with crowding and congestion for many years, albeit on the land side.

The roads around the port are choked most days of the year with heavy trucks, and the port has struggled to cope with the seasonal surge in demand in the lead-up to Christmas.

Residents along Leach Highway and other transport arteries have long complained about the adverse impact of large, noisy and smelly trucks travelling between the port and inland areas.

The port has upgraded its rail services but still relies overwhelmingly on road transport.

The bottlenecks around the port leave many people wondering why the development of a new commercial port has not been pursued with more urgency.

As *WA Business News* has reported many times, the James Point consortium, backed by BGC boss Len Buckeridge, has been trying for about seven years to build a new commercial harbour at Cockburn Sound.

James Point's stage 1 proposal would allow livestock trucks and other general cargo trucks to travel through Kwinana to a new wharf, instead of travelling through residential areas to the inner harbour.

Its stage 2 proposal would also handle containers.

However, its plans have been stymied by an unhelpful state government, which is evaluating proposals for a competing Fremantle Ports development.

The Fremantle Ports proposal involves reclaiming a large area of sea-bed for the construction of an island harbour, linked to the mainland by a causeway.

This has some parallel with North Port Quay, which also involves reclaiming a large chunk of the sea-bed.

If this hasn't been a deal breaker for the port, then it shouldn't be a deal breaker for North Port Quay.

Another aspect of North Port Quay, which is being put forward as a purely private sector initiative, is the development of canals.

Readers with a good memory may recall the controversy that surrounded canal developments at Mandurah.

They were predicted to bring environmental catastrophe.

But, 20 years on, canal developments are proceeding apace and nobody bats an eyelid.

Mandurah has grown up, it is accepting of development, and many people in Perth are also excited by the visionary concept put forward by the North Port Quay consortium.

Ultimately the project may fail environmental and commercial tests. It may even fail to win public support.

But let's give it a go instead of dismissing it from the outset.