

Cressida O'Hanlon's approach to the future of our suburbs

Last Friday, Steven Marshall told The Advertiser "Building A Bigger, Better South Australia" leaders' debate:

Journalist: What number should we set as a reasonable [population] target? Is two million by 2030 a reasonable target? [South Australia has a population of 1.77m now]

Steven Marshall: "I think two million is a reasonable target. We're coming up to the bicentenary and, surely, by the time we get to 2036, we should be at two million people."

Journalist: By 2030, is that too soon?

Steven Marshall: "Let's see."

Peter Malinauskas: "I don't think it would be responsible to even contemplate a two million population in Adelaide by 2030. That's a dangerous proposition...The idea that we could have an explosion in the space of eight years that represented a 30 p.c. increase in the population of Adelaide in such a short time is a reckless number. The State isn't in a position to handle that level of growth in eight years."

Former Planning Minister John Rau abolished the Development Act and set the legislative foundation for the Planning Code in 2016. He did this to facilitate urban infill. He did it without adjusting the Building Code, with the unintended consequence that residents of new multi-story buildings could look through their upper windows into the backyards of their neighbours in older homes without even standing on tippy toes, to give just one example of bad practice. No proper provision was made for off-street car parking. John Rau could not have done this without the acquiescence of the Liberal Party or the Greens, or both, in the Upper House.

Steven Marshall was re-elected in Dunstan on the understanding of many of us that he would review or even reverse the John Rau dispensation.

Far from doing that, Premier Steven Marshall used the Rau legislation to bring in the Planning & Design Code, a developer's dream, which prevails over the work of local-government heritage consultants that took many years.

Peter Malinauskas has apologised for the Rau legislation and pledged to reverse the worst parts of it. For Steven Marshall, the Rau legislation has been a useful tool for accelerating urban infill, accommodating developers, and, in my opinion, preparing for huge population growth.

If the electors of Dunstan re-elect Steven Marshall, in my opinion, they will be ratifying the Planning Code and his population target. It will mean that

Dunstan remains a safe Liberal Party electorate (as categorised by the ABC's Antony Green) and is treated accordingly by the Liberal Party.

If the electors of Dunstan elect me, it will mean Dunstan becomes the most marginal electorate in the State. You will have a local Member of Parliament committed to changing the Planning Code to protect historic precincts, protect historic buildings, reverse the loss of green space & tree canopy, and put the brakes on urban infill-demolition.

If the electors of Dunstan elect me, I will not be afraid to repudiate policies that are bad for our area, such as the Rau legislation and the Marshall Planning Code. I'll put what's good for our area ahead of bad Government policy designed to facilitate massive and swift population growth.

I was approached to attend the Residents' Association forum in early January.

I was keen, as you would expect of a challenger, to debate Steven Marshall's use of the Planning Code to facilitate bulldozers moving through Norwood's heritage homes.

I checked with the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and was told that, although Labor candidates would normally attend Candidates' Debates or Forums, when the debate was with the Liberal Premier, the Labor Leader has principal responsibility for that. When an experienced politician like Steven Marshall is head-to-head with a local newbie like me, there is a risk that his spin doctors will take my answers about local matters and spin them into a Statewide problem.

Consequently, I, unfortunately, had to decline. Also unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding in the communication of this.

Over the past 10 months I have knocked on over 6000 doors in the Dunstan electorate.

I've been told you want safer local streets, road safety for children walking to school, common-sense fixes for local issues, like gates at a local dog park, protection of local heritage buildings and a thoughtful review of urban infill.

It's for reasons like these that I want to be your representative in Parliament.

I will keep in touch with you, one-on-one. I will listen. I will be available to meet you at your home or at The Parade electorate office, in a way that is now only a distant memory in the Marshall era.

To me, this is representation and that is what matters.