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Cr Adrian Schinner
Deputy Mayor
Chair, Infrastructure Committee
Brisbane City Council
GPO Box 1434
Brisbane, Qld 4001



Dear Cr Schinner



Brisbane Parking Taskforce

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for consideration by the Brisbane Parking Taskforce.



As you would be aware, our members are the developers, owners and operators of the majority of commercial, retail and residential buildings in the city, and as such, will be impacted by any recommendations of the Taskforce.



It is on this basis that we provide the following comments for your consideration.

Background



As often noted in the media, Brisbane is one of the most expensive cities in the world in which to park.



With a single local government responsible for on-street parking while also owning a large proportion of the CBD's commercial car parks, Brisbane City Council is in a unique position to influence the cost and supply of parking in the city.



Unlike other cities, very few car parks in Brisbane's CBD are owned by individuals. The majority of non-Council assets are owned by major developers, and are managed by one of two key operators.



Over time, as sites within Brisbane's CBD have been redeveloped, the number of car parks attached to commercial buildings in the city has steadily declined.



Maximum car parking requirements and the cost of constructing and managing car parks have led to a reduction in their availability. While some buildings benefit from their attachment to existing developments with approval to operate public car parks, the majority are restricted to only providing the number of car parks required to service their own buildings.

Additionally, increasing demand for kerb-side space has led to a reduction in available on-street drop-off and loading bays for use by those visiting but not needing to park in the city.

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In order to remain an accessible and inclusive city, it is imperative that there are enough car parks and drop-off points to meet weekday and weekend demand, at an affordable rate.

Strategic decisions

While the CBD flourishes from Monday to Friday, BCC and Brisbane Marketing have invested in numerous campaigns to draw visitors and tourists to the city on weekends.



Unfortunately, the current costs and availability of parking in the CBD are hampering these efforts, and seeing visitors head to other destinations where it is easier and cheaper to park, such as Southbank.



In order to assist the revitalisation of the CBD, BCC needs to make a strategic decision regarding its policy position of 'revenue raising' through the current restriction of car parking, versus 'activation', which could be achieved through deregulation of planning requirements.



With BCC controlling planning regulations, on-street parking and a number of commercial car parks, Council is the most likely to benefit from the current restrictive parking arrangements.



It is critical that Council does not go down the path of other jurisdictions and introduce a car parking tax, which only serves to raise car parking rates and discourage visitors to the city.

While benefitting Council in the short-term, restrictive car parking requirements may inhibit the growth of the CBD, and key projects such as Howard Smith Wharves.



Availability and affordability of car parking can be crucial in stimulating visitor activity. McWhirters car park in Fortitude Valley, for example, plays a critical role in attracting visitors to the entertainment precinct. Without the availability of these car parks, visitors would be likely to choose another location to visit, with cheaper and easier access.



To ensure more weekend visitors to the CBD, Council is in a position to increase the availability of car parking through deregulating its planning requirements, which will also correspondingly reduce the cost to users.



Recommendations

To assist Council in shifting their policy position from 'revenue raising' to 'CBD activation', the Property Council offers the following recommendations:



Relax Development Approval (DA) conditions

Many commercial buildings have large car parks that lie dormant outside of office hours. Through their DA conditions, the majority of these buildings are restricted from operating public car parks.



To increase the available supply, Council could allow building owners to request a change to their DA conditions, allowing them to open their car parks to the public on Friday nights and weekends.

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Not only would this increase the overall supply of public car parks, it would also provide parking options at various points throughout the CBD, such as Eagle Street, which are currently underserved.

This option would also potentially provide greater accessibility to Council-owned sites, including Howard Smith Wharves and the Botanic Gardens.



Commuter car parking

Although often considered the responsibility of the State Government, the Property Council would like to see revenue raised through car parking directed towards the provision of commuter car parking.

Many owners of retail centres across Brisbane face an ongoing battle with commuters parking in their car parks and then catching BCC buses.

While commuter parking at train stations should be provided by the State Government, BCC also has a role to play in providing commuter parking at major public transport hubs.



Recycling assets

As noted, BCC owns a number of car parks in Brisbane. If Council's policy position was to shift to focus on activation rather than revenue raising, now is an opportune time to consider the sale of these assets.

Not only would this remove some of Council's internal conflicts, it would also provide much-needed funds for new infrastructure, and return these commercial assets to the private market.

With State and Federal Governments investigating how a number of assets can be recycled, it is an opportune time for Council to do the same.



Free vouchers

In the same way that BCC provides free tip vouchers to their ratepayers, they could also provide a number of weekend parking vouchers with their rates notices.

This would incentivise residents to visit the CBD, which along with deregulation of existing car parks, would assist in increasing the city's accessibility.



Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Brisbane Parking Taskforce.

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Yours sincerely



Chris Mountford
Deputy Executive Director

