

The wrong direction

DISAPPOINTMENT AS MOVE IS AXED

Tom Rabe

THE cancellation of plans to move a major government department to Stirling was at the forefront of discussions between Opposition leader Mark McGowan and City of Stirling Mayor Giovanni Italiano last Friday.

The proposal to move the Department of Commerce to a 35,000sq m office in the City of Stirling as part of the State Government's capital city strategic plan Directions 2031 and Beyond was aimed at attracting private investment in surrounding areas.

Cr Italiano said he was disappointed the State Government had chosen to cancel the Stirling move.

"We were looking forward to them building the 35,000sq m office space to bring in the department," Cr Italiano said.

"This would have been good for the economy and more importantly, that's what Directions 31 is all about."

But he said the cancellation would not damage the relationship with the State Government.

"The relationship isn't going to change while I'm the mayor, whether (the government) be

Labor or Liberal."

Mr McGowan said it was clear the State Government would not honour its commitment to the move after there was no mention of it in the latest Budget.

"The Barnett Government is

now trying to find excuses in an attempt to walk away from its commitments to relocate government departments and agencies across the metro area," he said.

In a media release dated Monday, October 15, 2012, the then

Finance Minister Simon O'Brien said the second phase was set to focus on the decentralisation of government agencies into metropolitan activity centres, saving millions of dollars.

"The Liberal-National Government has gone to the market seeking proposals for up to 35,000sq m in the City of Stirling to accommodate the Department of Commerce as the anchor tenant," Mr O'Brien said at the time.

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"This is the next step in the Government's long-term strategy, Directions 2031 and Beyond, and will help to identify potential accommodation solutions for the Stirling Precinct."

However, current Minister for Finance and Transport Dean Nalder last week confirmed the Department of Commerce would move to office accommodation in Cannington, already in the Government's property portfolio.

Mr Nalder said that the option of relocating to Stirling was carefully considered but changes to Perth's property market and the State's financial position meant the Stirling option was scrapped.

"I remain committed to considering value-for-money office accommodation solutions that support the decentralisation of government from the Perth central business district to the metropolitan suburbs," Mr Nalder said.

He said Stirling remained an attractive option for the State Government, given its proximity to transport links and existing commercial areas.

After the meeting between opposition infrastructure spokesman Ken Travers and Cr Italiano, Mr McGowan accused the State Government of breaking a key promise to the City of Stirling.

"This broken promise is a massive blow for the City of Stirling, which would have enjoyed a major local economic boost and a more vibrant civic hub," he said.

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