



Bulked up: Super Cheap's big-format retailer, Boating Camping & Fishing, says policies differ not only by State but by local councils as well. Picture: Guy Magowan

Bulky goods retailers seek uniformity

REBECCA KEENAN

Bulky good retailers are calling for a national approach to the booming industry, saying a failure to understand the needs of the sector is hindering growth.

Bulky Goods Retailers Association (BGRA) executive director Philippa Kelly said State governments needed to streamline planning processes to enable national retailers to successfully expand.

"The complete absence of communication between States on planning issues relating to the bulky goods retail sector is ridiculous," Ms Kelly said.

"We are national retailers with common needs throughout Australia. Why State governments can't share resources to develop national planning policies is beyond us."

WA recently joined most other States in reviewing planning policies and Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said she would highlight the issue at the next meeting of planning ministers.

"It is clear to us that the phenomenon of bulky goods has not been handled well in our planning system," Ms MacTiernan said after a recent BGRA quarterly forum in Perth.

The bulky goods sector has accelerated in WA but has not been helped by the Government's lack of understanding about the industry's needs.

At a national level the bulky goods sector accounts for around 22 per cent of all retail sales, or \$38.5 billion.

Ms Kelly said governments needed to understand the industry was very different to other types of retail.

"Our items are bulky so we need large amounts of affordable floor space for display, safe loading and unloading facilities away from consumers and car parking because our customers simply won't cycle home with their new microwave," she said.

Retailers were becoming frustrated with the different approaches by various governments, and warned that the industry would not be viable unless retailers could sustain low prices, easy access and car parking.

Super Cheap Autos managing director Peter Birtles said the different planning regimes in each State were an administrative burden.

Since Super Cheap launched its big-format retailer Boating Camping & Fishing (BCF) in 2005, the group has been steadily expanding across WA, Queensland and New South Wales. Over the next year it plans to open stores in Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand. It has five stores in WA with another three planned.

"We do find the policies are different, not only by State but by local councils as well," Mr Birtles said. "Sometimes it works to our advantage and sometimes it doesn't."

He supported a national approach but said it had to be guided by what customers wanted.

Jones Lang LaSalle bulky retail agent Olinka Combes agreed the industry needed a uniform approach as the sector grew. "Until we see a national approach to bulky goods precincts, State planning policies will continue to be challenged," Ms Combes said.



Philippa Kelly

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