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Jo Hutchison
A/G Assistant Secretary
Cities and Suburbs Unit
DITRDCA

Submission on Draft National Urban Policy

Dear Jo,

Following the release of the draft National Urban Policy and attending the Brisbane consultation last Monday, I am pleased to offer a submission focused on the importance of drawing out the superdiversity of Australia's cities and regions, and multiculturalism. I am a senior researcher within the Institute for Infrastructure in Society, based in the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy and founding-member of Superdiversity Research Australia (SRA). SRA is comprised of urban public policy advisors and researchers from the Australian National University, RMIT and SGS Economics and Planning.

Superdiverse communities are diverse in many ways including religious, cultural, linguistic, economic, age or gender, among others. The collective research by SRA scholaras and advisors demonstrates **"superdiversity" (Vertovec, 2007) is the new normal in urban Australia**. Our research shows that high levels of cultural diversity (e.g. measured by combining linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity) characterise an increasing number of Australian cities and suburbs. These communities are socioeconomically diverse, and with the right bundle of services and infrastructure, they attain high liveability. The following suggestions are based on this leading research and my review of the draft NUP. In advance, I acknowledge and fully support the thorough recognition of First Nations considerations and encourage indigenous values for planning be incorporated in the NUP.

In broad terms, first I suggest **deeper engagement throughout the NUP with the idea, stated in the draft, that Australia is "one of the most successful multicultural nations in the world" and that superdiversity be used to understand how our cities and suburbs can generate vital and vibrant contexts** for building "everyday multiculturalism" (Lobo, 2010); In essence, where superdiverse communities enjoy well-planned and serviced suburbs, they offer opportunities for building mutual understanding, tolerance, and harmony. Moreover, superdiverse communities with the right bundle of

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services and infrastructure, can further the NUP goals by demonstrating equity, community resilience, and economic productivity.

Second, it is positive to see the goal of equitable urban areas. **All other goals should be framed with equity in mind** (i.e. liveability, resilience, etc., are desirable when they are inclusive). The NUP should support internal organisation and investment decision-making across the Australian Government to be mindful of and deliver these goals in tandem, prioritising the principle of equity. **Superdiversity offers a way to consider equity and inclusion unique to the Australian urban context.**

Third, the focus on key goals would be complemented by clear and measurable criteria. I believe that the problem statements and analysis would be better developed in the State of Australian Cities reports, and that the “possible actions” in the draft NUP are too general and may not be effective to include them in the plan; As is the tradition of urban policy and planning in Australia, pathways to delivering goals are diverse and may be interpreted and achieved differently across areas and jurisdictions. In sum, I believe **the main purpose of the goals should be to support internal organisation within the Australian Government for consistent policymaking and public investment decision-making, measured against clear criteria.** Ideally, this could be bolstered by increasing investment in existing programs (e.g. thriving suburbs) to support state, territory, and local governments to lead major revitalisation programs in line with NUP.

Fourth, support for multiculturalism should be underscored throughout the NUP in addition to the principles in appendices, for example by drawing more on the national Multicultural Framework Review. The political environment, including current debates suggesting that migration places upward pressure on costs of living and housing affordability, are limiting and undermine progress towards social cohesion in our multicultural society. **It is imperative multiculturalism be given a more prominent place throughout the NUP. One way to understand the value of multiculturalism is through recognising superdiversity and liveability together** across Australian cities and suburbs. In Australia, superdiversity in urban neighbourhoods and regions supports, among other things, social interactions for mutual understanding, tolerance-building, and effective place-making (e.g. through entrepreneurial actions, broad problem analyses, creative opportunities and options exploration in formal planning processes).

Fifth, if “possible actions” and “principles” are to be included in the NUP, they should recognise diversity more completely. At present, the draft NUP suggests that equitable urban areas are ones that cater to the diverse needs of all community members, and it focuses on access to cultural and recreational activities that promote inclusion and wellbeing. While this is important, supporting superdiverse communities and multiculturalism goes beyond cultural and recreational activities. Support for multiculturalism and the urban traits and governance processes that enable superdiverse

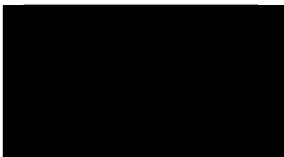
communities to thrive should be supported throughout the NUP. For example, housing availability and affordability should recognise the diverse needs of CALD households, and challenges that relate to homelessness and overcrowding (e.g. among former refugees) as well as the disconnect between housing and services and infrastructure can also be understood in terms of failing to support liveable and superdiverse communities.

Sixth, it is welcome to see the value placed on leveraging the knowledge and experience of multicultural communities to develop better and more innovative solutions to urban challenges (Objective 2). This is confirmed in our research, for example in supporting the community building and place-making efforts behind Dandenong's revitalisation in Melbourne (e.g. [Henderson, Sullivan & Gleeson, 2020](#)). Specifically, in the "possible actions" sections, **the capacity to work collaboratively in superdiverse communities across all goals should be highlighted**. Effective engagement with diverse communities in urban policymaking benefits from group-based as well as cross-group engagement.

Finally, in addition to supporting Australian Government departments to follow concise and clear criteria for decision-making that affects cities and suburbs, **the NUP has the potential to be applied to support ambitious, federally funded place-based initiatives**. Historically, when the Australian Government has had urban policy involvement, some of the more effective approaches have been area-based strategies (e.g. Better Cities Program 1991-96). With strong state and territory government, as well as local government leadership, the Australian Government could turbocharge efforts to deliver place-based revitalisation oriented around the NUP goals (e.g. if the Precincts, Thriving Suburbs, and City Deals were expanded). Given the reality of superdiversity across Australian cities together with the imperative to support successful multiculturalism, a core focus for place-based support should be superdiverse urban centres where there are complex, interconnected barriers to achieving the goals of the NUP, like urban decline.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries or would like to hear more about our research on superdiversity in Australian cities and suburbs. We would welcome the opportunity to present and discuss the relevance and opportunities of superdiversity for the NUP.

Sincerely,



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