



<http://www.southhobart.org/>  
[secretary@southhobart.org](mailto:secretary@southhobart.org)  
ARBN: IA10232

11 July 2024

Dean Lesser  
A/g Director • Engagement • Cities and Suburbs Unit  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
[urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au)

Dear Mr Lesser,

### **Submission for draft National Urban Policy**

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and your willingness to grant an extension for our submission.

A bit about our group, the South Hobart Sustainable Community (SHSC). We are a collection of like-minded locals who work together to lead more sustainable lifestyles and share what we learn along the way. Amongst our many guiding values we recognize that transitioning to a sustainable way of life is one of the key challenges of the 21st century. In the 14 years since we were formally founded, we have treated South Hobart as an experimental model of sustainability and this has included bulk buys of renewable energy systems, EVs (Australia's first), e-bikes and informing the community about sustainable living and disaster resilience. Among our other achievements are self-sufficiency measures such as hosting over one hundred grower gatherings, creating a community garden, and dozens of other community-building activities to build community spirit and encourage sustainability.

In recent years, we have actively engaged through Federal, State and Local Government consultation processes on policy and planning issues. This is to reaffirm that the community recognises the climate emergency we are now in, and wants the three tiers of government to be bold in its policy settings, and ensure the rules align with the vision to embed sustainability in our systems.

One of our dedicated members, Tim Williams, attended the 'Draft National Urban Policy Workshop' in Hobart on 3 July 2024 and recommended our group contribute to this worthwhile community engagement process.

### **Tasmanian context**

The two urban centres of Hobart and Launceston, where the majority of the Tasmanian population live, are very different to other cities around Australia. We have some challenges that differ, such as low educational attainment, intergenerational poverty, which often results in low socio-economic status, unemployment and poorer health outcomes in life (i.e. social determinants of health). Tasmania ranks often in the bottom two of all states in many of the key indicators in these areas.

On this basis, a one-size-fits-all National Urban Policy needs to respond to such major variations and consider the differences as well as the similarities of the country's 20 major

cities. Hobart and Launceston are more like towns than cities, and when Hobart is compared to the country's other capital cities it is at a very different stage of urban development, being many years (if not decades) behind Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, for example.

### **Key Issues**

The word 'sustainable' was used as both one of the five 'Goals' as well as one of the 'Objectives' ("04 Our Urban areas are sustainable"). Clearly no further detail has been created between the 'Goal' and the 'Objective'.

The list of six 'Principles' includes, "Urban development should actively improve social, environmental and economic outcomes". In a way, this is simply a generic definition of Sustainable Urban Development, using the common definition of the three pillars of sustainability as being the intersection of the three 'circles' of social, environmental and economic human activities.

This is a simplistic view where the three "circles" are of equal importance..

As humans are just one of the many species of life on Earth, we can easily understand that we are all living within the 'Environment'. Environment represents our understanding of Nature and its inter-dependent eco-systems that support life on Earth.

Within this 'environment', the human species have created societies within which to live together. But here, we are only referring to Human Society as living within the larger 'circle' of The Environment.

Then as only one species on this Earth, we have constructed something that society determined to be a useful 'system' for managing our social interactions, which we have called, the economy. Other species have done similar things but we don't recognise these in comparison to our own singular focus on economic issues.

The point here is that there is a hierarchy of systems, the economy is within our society's constructed system which itself is entirely within the Earth's all-pervasive ecosystem that we label, the environment.

If we use this lens to look at human development, as we are doing by creating a National Urban Policy, it would be wise to consider this hierarchy and keep our primary focus on conserving, restoring and regenerating a healthy ecosystem on Earth for all our societies and economies to exist within.

From this perspective, our National Urban Policy needs to define this commonly used and often undefined term, "sustainable", as being within a hierarchy of importance that then enables Liveable, Equitable, Productive, and Resilient cities to exist ... 'Sustainably'. So, we would argue that the term "sustainable" should be the overarching principle within which the other four 'Goals' sit, as Liveable, Equitable, Productive, and Resilient are all sub-sets of Sustainable.

In this way, as described above, the principle being put forward here is ...  
... to create long-term, aspirational Goals and then develop detailed methodologies to achieve them whilst prioritising, above all, protecting, conserving, restoring, and regenerating our unique and essential natural environment as the guiding principle that allows all other goals to be considered.

Other important issues to include within the proposed National Urban Framework include the following:

1. Transparency of how Goals, Objectives and Principles are to be achieved.
2. Always being inclusive and creating outcomes that are for the common good.
3. Seeking more resilient community living environments rather than increasing, ever-increasingly, the population of our existing cities, i.e. more liveable cities instead of bigger un-liveable cities.
4. Respond to the impending climate crisis by encouraging self-sufficiency within communities, e.g. growing produce in front and back yard gardens (food security and resilience), storing rainwater from the roofs of ALL buildings (water security and resilience), encouraging/financially supporting solar energy on ALL rooftops, including warehouses, supermarkets, offices, schools, as well as homes, combined with community batteries (energy security and resilience).
5. Supporting and encouraging innovation, creative thinking and alternative solutions, as opposed to “business as usual”. We need to do everything smarter than in our past, in order to create a better future for all.
6. Research overseas examples of forward-looking, liveable cities. There are many great examples of new ways of looking at old problems.
7. Prioritise Strategic Planning for each and every city, prior to implementing any specific planning requirements.
8. Allow/encourage/facilitate ‘Community Housing’ projects in carefully chosen areas of growing cities. These have great benefits to offer, similar in principle to Retirement Villages for over 55 year olds but in this case for everyone, where communal facilities improve the whole community’s health and well-being, and where intergenerational support can be built-in (e.g. a community library where older generations read to the pre-schoolers, where healthy food is grown and shared, where child-care is on tap, community events can occur and neighbours get to know each other through having shared responsibilities and opportunities).
9. Develop the Circular Economy. We can’t keep throwing our so-called ‘waste’ away. There is no such place as ‘away’. It creates huge, negative, long-term impacts on our environment. Waste must become Resource for mending/reuse, re-purposing, up cycling and lastly, recycling.
10. Locate the accessible and holistic health and education of children at the forefront of all new urban development along with the green open spaces that support their health and well-being.
11. Enshrine ethically-based and inclusive Universal Human Rights into the whole process.

Please contact us via [secretary@southhobart.org](mailto:secretary@southhobart.org) should you need to clarify any details.

Yours sincerely

Ben Clark  
Communications Coordinator  
On behalf of South Hobart Sustainable Community