



Floodplain Management Australia

Supporting Wise Planning and Development

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Mr Jim Betts
Secretary
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Australian Government

(Submitted on line)

Dear Mr Betts

Submission – draft National Urban Policy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments for consideration on the draft National Urban Policy (**dNUP**).

About Floodplain Management Australia

Floodplain Management Australia (**FMA**) was established to promote sound and responsible floodplain management, and to help reduce the risks of flooding to life and property.

FMA has continued to carry out these important roles for more than 60 years and is now the national voice for flood management, with a membership of over 180 Local Government Councils, catchment authorities, government agencies, businesses, insurers and professionals involved in all aspects of urban and rural flood risk management. Our members are at the front-line of flood risk assessment, flood management planning, decision making, emergency management and community engagement - see floods.asn.au

Flooding is Australia's costliest natural hazard-related cause of disasters when both tangible and intangible losses are taken into account. Australia's total economic exposure to flooding is estimated to be around \$525 billion (net present value) under a low emissions climate change scenario. The annual economic cost of floods in 2060 is projected to reach \$30.7 billion under a low emissions scenario, and \$40.2 billion under a high emissions scenario. (Deloitte Access Economics, 2021). FMA recognises these costs, and the impacts of flooding generally, are felt by individuals, businesses, each level of government and broader organisations generally, and strives to promote best practice approaches to urban development.

FMA has strong partnerships with key State/Territory and Commonwealth Government agencies including NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, NSW Department of Planning, Hosing and Infrastructure, NSW Reconstruction Authority, ACT State Emergency Service, Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Queensland Reconstruction Authority and the Bureau of Meteorology. In addition, we have links to equivalent organisations in the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Our international network is invaluable in sharing flood management experience and expertise from other nations with our members for the benefit of their communities.

Our Overall Comments

FMA commends the Australian Government for developing a policy to provide guidance for the growth, change and management of urban areas at a national level. We see this as important for the purposes of providing consistency, efficiency and linkages with broader national policies and

budget allocations.

Our interests are primarily focused on floodplain risk management (**FRM**), which is a significant consideration in the planning of cities. We recognise and support recognition of FRM, and the effects of climate change, in the dNUP and accept that this understandably needs to be at a high level for such a policy. However, we provide the following comments as to how FRM can be better reflected in the policy.

Consistency

The Australian Government can play an important role in ensuring a consistent best practice approach to the consideration of FRM in the planning of Australian cities. The work of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR), and in particular the Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, provide guidance on such key areas of FRM that could be recognised and endorsed by the NUP. In particular we encourage that where the NUP promotes consideration of FRM in the planning of cities, reference is made to the FRM process outlined in the AIDR “Managing the Floodplain Handbook.”

We would also support the further development of policy guidance in other key areas of FRM that lend themselves to a national perspective such as climate change, integration of First Nation people’s knowledge, and policy approaches for discrete issues such as shelter in place. The NUP could recognise that this would occur to support the ongoing implementation of the policy.

While promoting policy approaches that are formulated at national level, the NUP should recognise that such policies need to be adapted and implemented to suit local circumstances.

Efficiency

As outlined above there are various aspects of FRM that relate to topics that are relevant to the nation as whole. We recognise that flooding is one of a range of natural disasters affecting the growth of cities, and that often research associated with flooding is appropriately undertaken in the context of, and by agencies that manage, natural hazards generally. The consideration of such issues at a national level would be substantially more efficient than if needing to occur at a state or local level. The AIDR, Natural Hazards Research Australia and Geoscience Australia, already undertake such work.

The NUP could recognise that the Australian Government will support research into natural hazards and management practices for Australian cities to support the ongoing implementation of the policy.

Budgetary Priorities

FMA has been a long term advocate of promoting investment in mitigation and management of flood risks so that the devastating consequences of flooding can be averted. At present Australia’s expenditure on post flood clean up and recovery far outweighs the investment on pre-emptive measures, with around 97% of natural disaster expenditure on recovery and just 3% on planning and mitigation.

FMA supports the recommendation of the 2014 Productivity Commission Inquiry into Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements for Commonwealth Government investment in pre-disaster initiatives to be increased to \$200 million per year, to be matched by the States and Territories. Our members have implemented a range of flood mitigation and management measures which have led to substantial savings in flood damages and recovery and reconstruction costs. Reduction in flood risks would also provide immediate financial community benefits, in the form of lower costs of flood insurance.

Other risk reduction measures such as property buy-backs and house-raising, as well as the development and implementation of planning and building controls/codes which support flood compatible building, also can require significant funding allocations.

We would encourage recognition of the importance of investment in mitigation and management of

flood risks in the dNUP, and commitment from the Australian Government to support this.

Conclusion

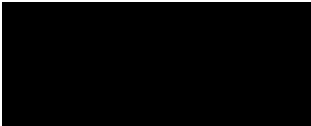
FMA brings together expertise and experience from all aspects of flood protection, preparedness, response and recovery, with involvement in the planning process from a range of perspectives.

In summary, FMA applauds the Australian Government’s initiative in preparing a national urban policy, and recognising the importance of flood risk management and climate change to ensuring that the growth of our cities occurs in tandem with the improved the resilience of our communities.

We trust that our comments will assist in ensuring the final policy will provide consistency, efficiency and linkages with broader national policies and budget allocations in a manner that promotes appropriate floodplain risk management practices in Australia.

We thank you again for the opportunity to be involved. Please let us know if we can assist further.

Yours faithfully



Sue Ribbons
President

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