

3 July 2024

Australian Government  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra ACT 2601

Via email: [urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au)

**RE: TasFarmers Submission – National Urban Policy**

TasFarmers is the peak representative body for agriculture in the state and remains dedicated to advocating for the interests and needs of Tasmanian farmers. TasFarmers represents producers across a range of agricultural commodity groups including meat, wool, dairy, vegetables, grains, forestry, and horticulture. Agriculture is a key pillar of Tasmania’s economy and TasFarmers is committed to ensuring the sector remains profitable and sustainable.

TasFarmers welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the development of a National Urban Policy. We have structured our feedback to match the key goals within the draft National Urban Policy which we believe most relate to the country’s agricultural sector.

Equitable

*“Where everyone has fair access to resources, opportunities and amenities, no matter where they live or their socio-economic status.”*

Urban and rural areas have become increasingly economically, socially, and environmentally linked. The importance of the mutually beneficial relationship between the two should be recognised in the development of a national urban policy. An appropriately designed urban policy should aim to provide strategic direction for the successful management of this rural-urban linkage and allow this relationship to prosper into the future.

Cities and suburbs are reliant on rural areas for the bulk of their fundamental resources including food, fibre, and raw materials. In turn, rural areas are reliant on urban areas for certain farm inputs, workforce requirements, alternative market opportunities, administrative support, telecommunication needs and advanced healthcare services. Therefore, it is clear the success of urban areas depends on the success of rural areas and vice versa.

The draft urban policy lists “how cities grow spatially and manage population growth” as a key determining factor of a city’s equity. The spatial expansion of urban areas, or urban sprawl, often comes at the cost of productive agricultural land. For urban areas to be liveable, equitable, productive, sustainable, and resilient, as the aim of the urban policy suggests, the sustainable management of peri-urban and urban-rural fringes is crucial.

*Recommendation:*

1. The urban policy should consider the impact of urban sprawl on rural and regional communities and devise a clear strategy to sustainably manage and mitigate these impacts.
2. The urban policy should incorporate a more detailed explanation of how it endeavours to align with the Regional Investment Framework to better demonstrate the linkages between national policy for urban and regional/rural areas.

Productive

*“Where cities foster shared prosperity and provide economic opportunities by enabling goods and services to move efficiently, and providing people with access to employment, services and infrastructure.”*

Urban areas source a range of goods and services from rural communities which supports the efficient movement of these goods and services throughout urban centres. Most of the food sold in Australia, predominantly in urban areas, is produced by Australian farmers with more than 90% of fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, milk, and eggs sold in supermarkets domestically produced<sup>1</sup>. The productivity of urban areas is reliant on these key inputs from rural areas including food and fibre.

The increasing population of Australia’s urban areas is rapid with our capital cities growing by over half a million people in 2022-23<sup>2</sup>. This population increase saw the growth rate of Australia’s capital cities sitting at 3.6% in 2022-23 compared to 1.4% in regional areas. With an increasing population comes an increasing requirement for food a majority of which originates from our rural areas. The efficient supply of food and fibre from rural to urban areas relies on suitable infrastructure, transportation, and telecommunication systems. For urban areas to prosper, they need to ensure these key elements are maintained and upgraded as required to support rural areas in maintaining the food security of a growing urban population.

High-density urban populations have an increased demand for goods such as electricity and associated infrastructure. Australia is currently transitioning to more renewable energy sources, to help achieve the Government’s goal of 82% renewable energy in our electricity grids by 2030<sup>3</sup>. As this transition progresses there will be an evident impact on rural and remote communities where renewable energy infrastructure is often proposed and built. Renewable energy is seen as an adaptive measure to reduce emissions however the installation of renewable energy infrastructure in rural areas can have significant impacts on the productivity and value of farming properties. These impacts should be considered in urban areas particularly when planning for future electricity consumption in these areas.

*Recommendation:*

1. The urban policy should consider strategies to deal with potential future competing interests between urban and rural areas regarding resource (water) use.
2. The urban policy should consider prioritising the maintenance of urban infrastructure as a key enabler of the flow of goods and services from rural to urban areas.
3. The urban policy should consider the impact of renewable energy infrastructure on the productivity of rural areas when considering options for servicing urban populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/food>

<sup>2</sup> Reference: <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/capital-city-growth-highest-record>

<sup>3</sup> Reference: <https://international.austrade.gov.au/en/why-australia/go-green-with-australia>

## Sustainable

*“Where governments, industry and community work together to appropriately plan for urban growth, reduce emissions, promote a circular economy and adapt to climate change to ensure that our urban areas meet the needs of diverse communities and that our naturals are rehabilitated for future generations.”*

The sustainability of rural and urban areas is intricately linked with ecosystem services playing a key role. Ecosystem services contribute to the overall sustainability of a region through a variety of mechanisms including:

- a. Regulating services which regulate ecosystem services including maintaining water, air and soil quality and regulating climate and extreme weather events.
- b. Supporting services including photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, soil creation and the water cycle.
- c. Provisioning services including the material and energy outputs such as food, fibre, water, and other resources.

Collectively, these services are typically concentrated in rural and regional areas and flow through to support and regulate the urban environment. Regulating services are of high importance for urban areas as they are typically areas of concentrated heat, emissions, and pollution.

Carbon sequestration and storage is prominent in rural areas and is key to mitigating the impacts of climate change which has an overarching positive impact including on urban areas. Rural communities continue to make significant voluntary led contributions to reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate including livestock feed supplements, soil carbon projects, tree plantings, regenerative agriculture, and installation of renewable energy infrastructure. The contribution of rural communities in reducing emissions is a key aspect of the nationwide approach to climate change.

Federal and state environmental policy and legislation continues to regulate the use and conservation of nature. The ongoing National Environmental Law reform is likely to have a significant impact on how land is used for conservation and emission reduction purposes in rural areas. Farmers in our rural areas are responsible for managing 55% of Australia’s land mass and have extensive skill and knowledge in sustainable land management<sup>4</sup>. Any restrictions or additional administrative burden placed on farmers through this law reform process could impact the rural sectors emission reduction efforts which will likely have a flow on effect to urban environments.

It will also be vital to consider any future changes to environmental policy and legislation that may impact how rural communities use and conserve nature. For example, the ongoing National Environmental Law reform is likely to have a significant impact on how farmers use their land for conservation and emission reduction purposes. This is likely to have a flow on effect as urban areas work to reduce extra emissions due to restrictions placed on the rural sector.

Meeting Australia’s emission reduction goals will require a collaborative approach across geographic regions including between rural and urban areas.

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<sup>4</sup> Reference: [https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/snapshot-of-australian-agriculture#:~:text=Australian%20agriculture%20accounts%20for%3A,production%2C%20in%20December%202020\)%20and](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/snapshot-of-australian-agriculture#:~:text=Australian%20agriculture%20accounts%20for%3A,production%2C%20in%20December%202020)%20and)

*Recommendation:*

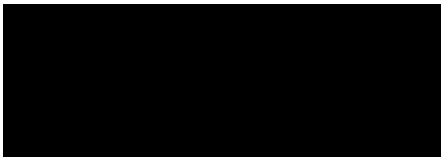
1. The urban policy should consider ways to collaborate with rural areas in climate change mitigation activities.
2. The urban policy should aim to align with existing federal and state government climate change related policy.

Conclusion:

TasFarmers understands the importance of a strong relationship between urban and rural areas and recognises the mutual benefits such a relationship can bring. We believe a strong national urban policy, with the input of key stakeholders including from the agricultural industry, will allow for the development of urban, regional, and rural communities across the country.

We welcome further consultation. Please contact TasFarmers if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,



Nathan Calman  
Chief Executive Officer