



04 July 2024

Submitted via email to: urbanpolicy@infrastructure.gov.au

RE: Public Consultation of the Draft National Urban Policy
Submission by Tim Williams

I hereby submit the following feedback, responses and ideas for consideration by the review team.

Submitter:

Tim Williams is a licenced Building Designer in Hobart, Tasmania.

He is an award-winning Eco Sensitive Design Consultant having been awarded the coveted 'Hummingbird Award' by the Living Future Institute of Australia (LFIA) in November 2022. "This award recognises people in the LFIA community that have made outstanding contributions to accelerate the uptake of regenerative design to help build a 'Living Future'".

Tim is the Principal of his private practice in South Hobart, *wombat - Eco Sensitive Design*.

He has a Bachelor of Architecture degree (with Honours) from the University of NSW (1988) and a Master of Science degree (with Distinction) in Architecture, Energy and Sustainability from London Metropolitan University, UK (2010).

Tim has lectured sustainable design students at post-graduate level at the London Metropolitan University, UK, and students of architecture at under-graduate level at the University of Canberra and the University of Technology Sydney. He has also taught as a lead tutor in Sustainable Design at the University of Tasmania.

Tim has practised in architecture and design studios in England, Denmark, France and Morocco.

He has travelled extensively in western Europe, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, the USA and Asia.

He has 36 years post-graduation experience as an architect/building designer specifically focussed on the principles of sustainable design.

Since January 2022 Tim has practiced *regenerative design* as the only *Living Future Accredited* (LFA) professional in Tasmania, [*regenerative design* – as defined by the *Living Building Challenge* and the *Living Community Challenge*, which have been created and propagated by the *International Living Future Institute* (ILFI), head-quartered in Seattle, USA and managed in Australia by the LFIA].

Tim is a passionate advocate for the *Living Building Challenge* in Tasmania as well as across Australia, having been one of the four instigators for its introduction to and adoption in Australia in 2011.

Tim also volunteers and is an active member of the following local advocacy groups:

- ▶ Sustainable Living Tasmania,
- ▶ South Hobart Sustainable Community,
- ▶ Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania,
- ▶ Renew / Smart Energy Australia - southern Tasmania,
- ▶ The Men's Table, Hobart, and
- ▶ International Living Future Institute / Living Future Institute of Australia.

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Tim attended the '**Draft National Urban Policy Workshop**' in Hobart on 3rd July 2024 and found this to be a very worthwhile community engagement and feedback process.

However, one very important issue regarding this community engagement process was raised by a fellow attendee and it is relevant to highlight it here.

- The approximately 18 attendees in Hobart were self-selected and voluntarily gave up their time to attend the Workshop. This was self-evidently a group of highly educated and deeply engaged local citizens of the Hobart community who had easy access to the central Hobart venue.
- It was pointed out that this only offers a very narrow representative group of 'Hobartians' as there is a considerable underclass in Hobart, and across Tasmania more generally – people with low levels of education, intergenerational poverty, low socio-economic status, unemployed or with unstable employment and little opportunity in life to have a say on important matters (*such as a new National Urban Policy being introduced by the federal government for the first time since 2011*).
- The point was clearly made that these people's voices are just as important as those of us who, through good fortune, have easy access to have a say on these important matters that affect everyone.

Having said the above on behalf of those who don't get to have a say, this is now what I wish to say ...

Some Background

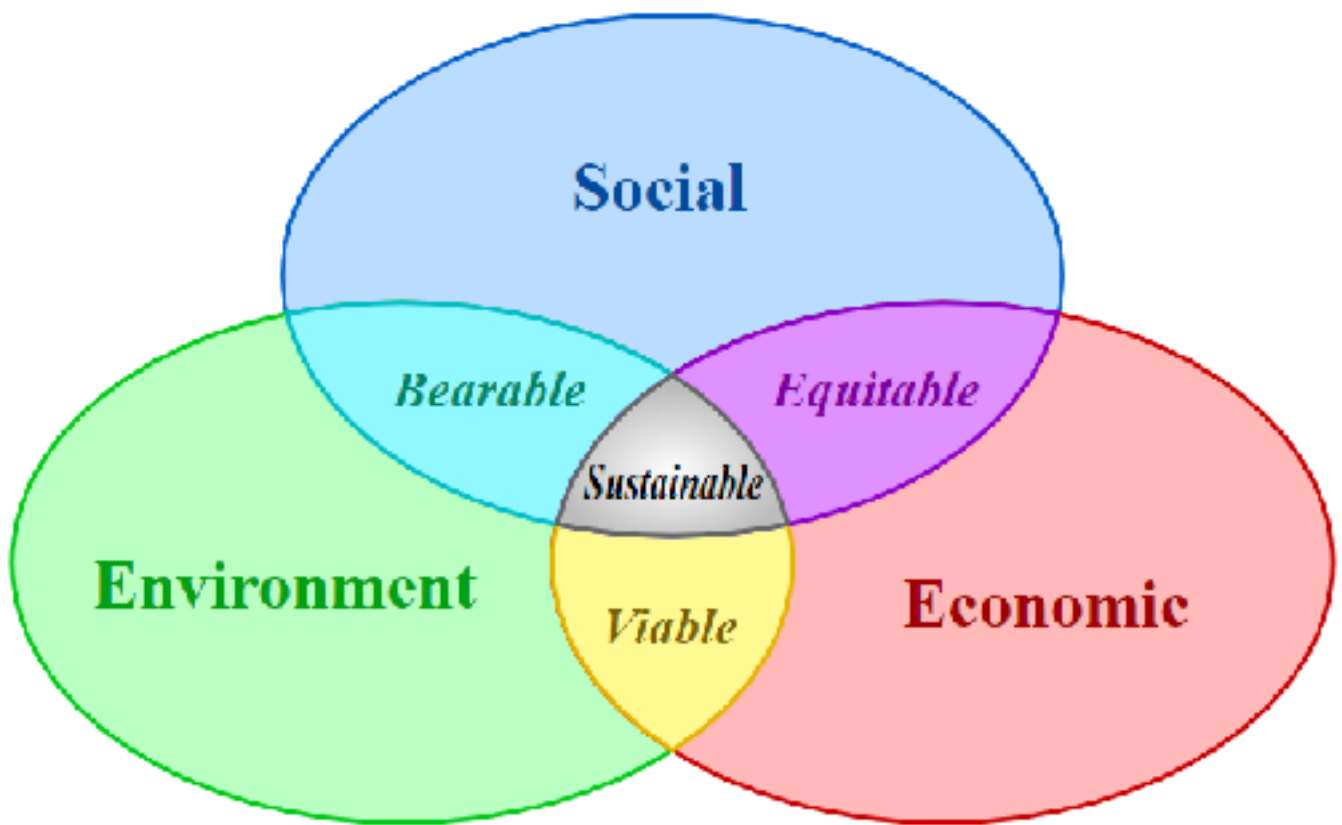
The two urban centres of Hobart and Launceston, where the majority of the Tasmanian population live, is very different to other cities around the mainland of Australia. As described above, there are people with low levels of education, intergenerational poverty, low socio-economic status, unemployed or with unstable employment and little opportunity in life, who are a greater percentage of the overall population than in other States.

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. It is important to remember that Hobart was the second British colony in Australia and grew as a town before Melbourne had even been created!

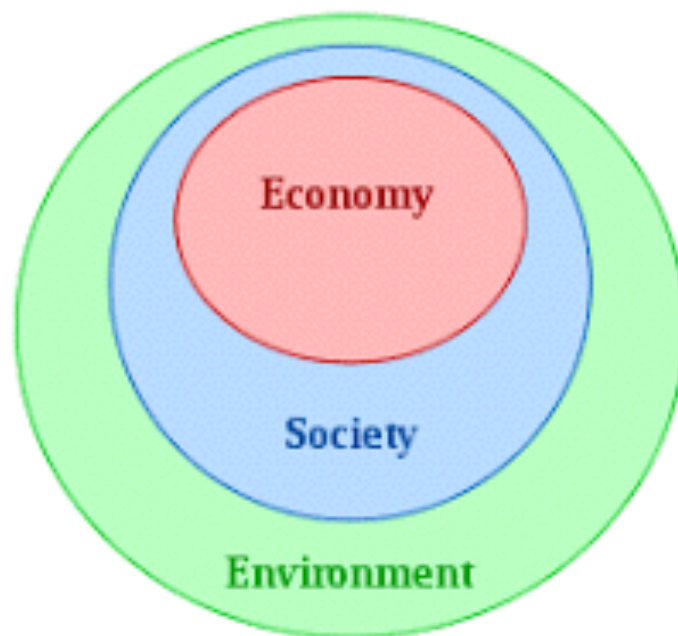
Key Issues

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 (refer to the diagram below).



This is a simplistic view where the three “pillars” are of equal importance, where in fact, another diagram explains more realistically how these three pillars could (or should) be related to each other ((refer to the second diagram below).



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. Many other species have done this, too (e.g. other primates, fruit bats, brumbies, termites, etc.). 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.

My 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, I 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 regard, I would highly recommend the following as a guide for your inclusion in the National Urban Policy: the "**Living Community Challenge**" which is described by the ILFI as being:

"... a framework for master planning, design, and construction. It is a tool to create a symbiotic relationship between people and all aspects of the built environment.

The program is a call to action to governments ... to create communities that are as connected and beautiful as a forest."

They also offer the following, inspiring and aspirational philosophical approach to this enormous challenge for current humans all over the planet, i.e. how do we all live sustainably on this single planet, especially as our human population keeps on rising and we become ever more concentrated as a species in ever-growing cities. In itself, this is clearly *unsustainable* to continue for ever within the finite, very specific and clear limits of the Earth's environment.

*"Imagine communities that function like a forest ecosystem. The Living Community Challenge is organised into seven performance areas" ... called 'Petals' being the high level principles within which a detailed set of 'Imperatives' must be achieved: **Place, Water, Energy, Health + Happiness, Materials, Equity, and Beauty.***

These seven Petals align well with the currently proposed five 'Goals' and it may be helpful to consider expanding these to at least include the concept of 'Beauty', based on qualitative measures such as creating biophilic relationships between people and nature within all cities, which science confirms as an intrinsic human need for an inter-connection with nature supports human health and well-being.



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 even 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. People need to become **Producers NOT Consumers**.
10. Locate the accessible and holistic **health and education of children** at the forefront of all new city 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.