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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Cities and Suburbs Unit
National Urban Policy

Value Advisory Partners submission

This submission is an attachment containing responses to the longform questions detailed in the online form. In attempting to complete the online form issues were encountered when attempting to progress from page 3 to page 4.

For completeness, Attachment 1 included with this submission contains VAP's responses to the short form questions contained on Page 3 of the online form.

Do you agree with the Australian Government's goals for cities and suburbs?

(Liveable, Equitable, Productive, Sustainable, Resilient)

Yes No

Would you like to elaborate?

Broadly, Value Advisory Partners agrees with and supports the goals described in the draft NUP.

We note that it will be important that alongside the policy, goals, objectives and actions of the final NUP, that the implementation of the actions through a range of design, development and delivery responses will either enable or constrain the outcomes being sought. In other words, implementation of the actions described in the NUP is an important corollary to the NUP itself.

Liveable

VAP fully supports this objective. Places must be attractive and meet peoples' needs, including being affordable. Places that are not liveable and affordable create social problems – witness the increase in domestic violence in mortgage belts and areas of lower socio-economic attainment.

Equitable

VAP fully supports this objective. Equity is an important principle in our Federation. It means access to housing, education and health infrastructure & services wherever one lives

Productive

VAP fully supports this objective. Without being productive, our cities will not be able to support the infrastructure & services and standard of living people expect.

Sustainable

VAP fully supports this objective. Government must have an eye to the future, ensuring that the next generations are not left to clean up our mess.

Resilient

Resilience is about our capacity to cope and recover when our vulnerability is exposed to an event or episode. Importantly, it means that when an event occurs (whatever form that takes) our urban systems may be impacted locally, but do not fail. Our resilience can be required in response to economic shocks, climate change and hazard, social change or upheaval and technology failures or shocks (e.g. cyber security).

The final NUP could consider this broader description or definition of the Resilience goal.

As commented earlier, VAP is proposing that Smart is considered to be included as an additional goal for the final NUP. By Smart we mean that our cities and places evolve to adopt an increasingly data driven and digitally enabled decision-making environment for planning and urban design. This will include powering-up for more adaptive and flexible decision making in response to shifting policy priorities, such as climate change, housing delivery and a transitioning economy, as well as being better able to respond to external shocks to the system.

Do you think the Australian Government focussing on the objectives will lead to the achievement of the goals?

Yes No

Would you like to elaborate?

The spread and typology of the objectives described in the draft policy look quite solid. The policy would not want to be definitive that these objectives **will** lead to achieving the goals, but they certainly present as a **viable** pathway to achieving the goals, coupled with the associated actions.

Critical to achieving the goals, and by extension the purpose of the NUP, is to put people at the centre of the policy. To borrow from Jan Gehl; first life, then spaces, then buildings: the other way around never works.

Value Advisory Partners has seen from close range, across many place-based engagements with government and the private sector to grow, sustain and build resilience in our precincts and cities, that there are some repeated **enablers and success factors** for achieving positive outcomes:

- Governance approaches that foster coordination, commitment and engagement across all levels of government, the community and industry
- Governments can significantly impact, through investing in infrastructure and placemaking, a better utilisation of land for enhanced outcomes in productivity, liveability, sustainability and resilience
- Through a better understanding of the influence the delivery of different assets/infrastructure, urban design and place elements have on the urban form, it is possible to increase the probability of curating productivity, liveability, sustainability and resilience outcomes
- New approaches to assessment methods and finance and funding are needed to scale up investment in enabling infrastructure for urban growth and to fund the current infrastructure deficits, particularly in social infrastructure

In reflecting on the specific objectives VAP offers the following brief observations:

No-one and no place left behind

VAP fully supports this objective.

All people belong and are welcome

A more explicit reference that specially recognises and acknowledges the needs of people with a disability should be included.

Our urban areas are safe

VAP would like to call out and acknowledge the references to climate risk included here. We further note there are some actions included with objective for sustainability at are specifically about climate risk assessment and land use planning, as well as preparation and mitigation over rebuilding

Our urban areas are sustainable

VAP is suggesting the description for this objective is broadened beyond a net zero emissions focus also be explicit about the performance through adaptation and recycling of existing assets and infrastructure.

Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing

VAP fully supports this objective.

Our urban areas promote productivity

More than just connecting people to jobs and services, the aim should be to locate jobs closer to where people live, though active planning of employment nodes as well as pursuing a policy of connected polycentric cities, especially for larger cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Are there other key urban challenges that you think are important on a national scale that are not included in the draft National Urban Policy?

Yes No

Would you like to elaborate?

Housing availability and affordability is not just a function of increasing supply. There are a range of factors that feed into the equation for housing availability, choice and affordability, including:

- The capacity to pay, which is a function of the ratio of house prices to wages, that is shifting unfavourably for homebuyers
- The role of housing - as a basic human need, or for personal wealth creation (supported by taxation policy) which impacts market access and participation
- Governments stepping back from delivery of public/social housing, contributing to a slower and lower rate of delivery and longer waiting lists
- Ageing in place policies, while providing older Australians with better outcomes, have the corollary effect of tying up housing.

Limitation to **current assessment methods** and **financing and funding** approaches has resulted in an infrastructure deficit. These limitations need to be addressed to catch up current deficits across all infrastructure types (economic, social, environmental) as well as meet the timely delivery of enabling infrastructure to support growth. New approaches for funding and financing of infrastructure could include:

- Flexible assessment methods of the costs and benefits of infrastructure. Current methods fail to account for the full set of benefits, including non-market values, resulting in a deficit in infrastructure to support many of the elements that make up the Liveability goal
- A greater role for private sector to deliver and fund urban infrastructure, noting this would need to consider asset ownership, risk transfer and risk management questions.
- Innovation in shared delivery models is required; presently public/private collaborations are contained to PPP's, which have inherent limitations.

Land use planning

- Current planning and land use strategies are poorly informed, if at all, by future hazard and climate risk. Coordinated practices about how to account for hazard and climate risk in land use planning is critical and should be a priority for all governments. Hazard data is often outdated and methods for assessing multiple hazards are still in early stages of development, compounding problems.
- There has been a tendency to accelerate housing supply by changing zoning, particularly uplift zoning, which assumes the market will respond in line with government's intent. There are many instances where the market has not responded to meet the scale and/or timing of delivery (e.g. Fishermans Bend in Melbourne; Green Square in Sydney). Other actions from government may be required alongside zoning changes to catalyse the expected development, such as investment in public transport and social infrastructure.
- Appropriate provisioning for future employment lands may be required alongside housing. Presently in Melbourne for example, there is a misalignment of the locations of housing and job density growth, which will have implications for productivity, commute times and job choice and liveability.

Each objective in the draft National Urban Policy includes potential actions. What other actions would you like to see included?

VAP offers the following as further actions to meet the objectives of the draft NUP.

Our urban areas promote productivity

- Where appropriate, such as Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, planning for delivering a polycentric city should be thoroughly investigate and tested. If validated, efforts to translate plans into meaningful outcomes on the ground need to be developed and delivery curated through appropriate governance models and upfront commit to investment by government and the private sector.

- More effort is required – data, planning practices, stakeholder engagement, incentives - to ensure that a diversity of jobs and industries are available closer to where people live

No-one and no place left behind

- A commitment to the principle of 20-minute cities (or 30mins)
- Accessibility as a priority, where both connections between local neighbourhood and city-wide commuting become more convenient promoting less car dependency and providing better access to essential services, employment, family and friends.
- Delivery of services, amenity and enabling infrastructure in a timelier manner, in line with populations being established, not only once a critical mass of housing/people are in place
- New funding and delivery models for infra, including role for private sector (e.g. Bennelong bridge at Wentworth point)
- A commitment to Inclusionary zoning, or, a specific minimum target for affordable and social housing

All people belong and are welcome

- Explicitly make reference to those with a disability, whose unique/specific needs ought to be explicitly identified and captured in order that they are not missed or forgotten in our planning

Our urban areas are safe

- Commit to targets for availability of and accessibility to vulnerable populations, including families fleeing domestic violence and the homeless
- Review planning policies and standard conditions of development consent to promote the inclusion of smart city initiatives
- Explore the challenges and the use of smart technologies to enhance the nighttime economy

Our urban areas are sustainable

- Make clear that the typology, location and density of housing will also play in a role in the sustainability of our urban areas
- Maximise connections and accessibility to the existing amenity and infrastructure
- Investigate where practicable options to upgrade the capacity, performance and useful life of existing assets and infrastructure to support growth in the first instance

Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing

- The typology, location and density of housing will also play in a role in the sustainability of our urban area, e.g. shoe-horning people into towers as opposed to a mix of built form typologies

Do you agree with the principles in Appendix A?

Yes No

How would you see these in action?

VAP acknowledges and supports the proposed principles as described in the draft NUP. We encourage these principles to be codified in the final NUP.

To oversee and steward the effective implementation of the policy, we would propose a multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary steering group to be convened as soon as practicably possible.

A monitoring, evaluation and learning framework (MEL) should be in place from immediately when the policy is in place as a mechanism for continuous performance monitoring and reporting.

Do you have any other comments?

Australia's population is projected to grow significantly over the next 25 years. In a BAU scenario, the bulk of this growth will settle in our capital cities and main urban areas.

Critical to achieving the goals and by extension the purpose of the NUP is to put people at the centre of the policy. To borrow from Jan Gehl; first life, then spaces, then buildings: the other way around never works.

Placing people at the centre of how we plan for and deliver this growth is essential: their economic sustainability, health, wellbeing, sense of purpose and belonging are all tied to how well our cities are planned and designed to provide them with access to and availability of the housing, jobs, amenity and services needed to lead full and productive lives. There is a need to look how development of our cities embraces and respond to the complexities by incorporating the knowledge and experiences through a multi-disciplinary lens to ensure the more optimal long-term outcomes.

On the other side of that same coin our governments and by extension the nation needs those same outcomes for our collective prosperity, sustainability and vitality.

The principles described in a range of current urban planning and design strategies and policies, such as 20-Minute Cities and Smart Cities, provide sound guidance for achieving the aspirations of the NUP. While these concepts have drawn some angst and criticism from sections of the community, they are founded on the premise of betterment for citizens.

At the pace and scale of growth that our urban areas are forecast to experience over the coming decades we are going to need well considered policies and frameworks that put people and places at their heart to help steward the progress to the set of goals the NUP is proposing.

Ultimately, we can look to and draw on the **enablers and success factors** that underpin where this has been done well previously (*see VAP's response to Q.31 - Do you think the Australian Government focussing on the objectives will lead to the achievement of the goals?*).

We note that it will be important that alongside the policy, goals, objectives and actions of the final NUP that the design, development and delivery of our urban places are equally recognised as either enabling or constraining the outcomes being sought. Implementation of the actions described in the NUP is an important corollary to the NUP itself.



We encourage the Australian Government to make all reasonable efforts to encourage engagement and commitment to final NUP by all levels of government. This includes between the three levels of government, across the breadth of responsible departments, agencies and branches of each of the levels of government and finally within each of the departments, agencies and branches with responsibility for planning and delivering our cities and places.

Attachment 1

VAP's previous response to the short form questions included on Page 3 of the online form

17. What other key goals should be included in the National Urban Policy? Include a brief description of why?

- *Smart – Optimise functioning of the city, promote sustainable economic growth, improve the quality of life*
-

18. What do you think would most improve the liveability of Australian cities?

Integrated transport & land use planning to deliver balanced density, amenity and design outcomes

19. What do you think would most improve equity in Australian cities?

- Diversity of housing options & price points including govt directly delivering 10% public housing
-

20. What do you think would most improve productivity in Australian cities?

- Locating jobs closer to where people live with better more frequent transport links
-

21. What do you think would most improve Sustainability in Australian cities?

- Building code standards for housing that improve their efficiency while lowering operating costs
-

22. What do you think would most improve the resilience of Australian cities?

- Integrate hazard risk & climate change into land use planning to support well adapted urban growth
-

23. Which of the following do you see as the most important objective?

Select all that apply*

- **No-one and no place left behind**
- All people belong and are welcome
- Our urban areas are safe
- Our urban areas are sustainable
- Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing
- Our urban areas promote productivity
- Undecided

Note: * VAP is selecting only one response here, noting the question is asking about the most important objective