

Department of Infrastructure Transport, Regional
Development, Communications and the Arts
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Our Ref:
Date:

25485815
4 July 2024

Dear Sir / Madam

SUBMISSION – A NATIONAL URBAN POLICY FOR AUSTRALIA

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the National Urban Policy Consultation draft. While we have reviewed the entirety of the document and can provide feedback on the detail if required, our submission is focussed on the purpose and potential benefit of the draft Policy.

The stated aim of the policy is to uplift the quality of life in our cities and urban areas and to help prioritise the Federal Government's investment and policy decisions relating to our regional cities. Council fully supports this aim which is aligned to the priorities and values captured in our own Community Strategic Plan and supporting policies.

Beyond this broad purpose, the Policy would benefit from clearer explanation of how local governments are expected to use the Policy to support sustainable growth and community development while maintaining financial sustainability. A clearer articulation of the policy gaps and/or inconsistencies that the draft Policy is seeking to address would also assist in better understanding the "why" for all users of the Policy.

We note that the discussion draft includes commentary and actions around policy areas that are already well understood and embedded in State and local legislation and initiatives, such as community participation, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, climate mitigation and adaptation, housing diversity and urban design to name a few. Councils are experiencing an unprecedented range of reforms at the present and so care should be taken not to duplicate or unnecessarily complicate existing approaches to addressing the goals that are identified within the draft Policy.

National Cabinet has agreed that better planning for stronger growth is a priority for a shared vision and that stronger alignment and partnerships across and with governments is required. In discussing the role of the Australian Government, Council suggests that the National Urban Policy would benefit from a stronger emphasis on the unique opportunities available to it that would support urban policy:

- Solutions to address the current housing crisis should include consideration of fiscal policy levers that influence investment decisions.
- Initiatives to incentivise domestic investment in build to rent projects and other forms of housing should be further considered.
- Commitment to fund large infrastructure projects required to support the urban growth and regional resilience envisaged under the Policy, for example the South West Illawarra Rail Link (SWIRL).
- Migration policy is referenced, however it is not explored in any detail in the draft.
- Incentivisation of investment and migration to regional cities with capacity to accommodate growth and absorb some pressure from capital and coastal cities.
- Enhanced investment in the tertiary education, skills and training area.
- Establish strategic consistency in urban policy across jurisdictions.

The draft Policy rightly includes considerable discussion about the range of infrastructure and services needed to support cities, towns and suburbs. However, the cost of such investments is increasing and there is strong competition between locations and across infrastructure and servicing categories for the limited resources available. There is an opportunity for stronger leadership to guide investment into infrastructure and servicing through the National Urban Policy.

The vast majority of the actions contained in the draft Policy are based on sound principles and are supported. We note however that actions range from strategic (eg invest in supporting infrastructure; improve data capture; manage future climate risks) to some quite specific local scale suggestions (installing green walls; using cool paints; community gardens). Reviewing the actions to achieve some consistency in this regard is encouraged, with preference for more detail and commitment around game-changing initiatives.

Council staff would be pleased to elaborate on the matters raised in this submission if required. Please contact me via email ldavis@wollongong.nsw.gov.au for further information or to discuss our feedback.

Yours faithfully



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