



**STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND HERITAGE**

INQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

SUBMISSION

FROM THE

CITY OF DAREBIN

Prepared by the Strategic Planning Unit in collaboration with Environmental Strategy,
and Community Planning and Advocacy
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Contents

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1.1.	Introduction:	5
1.2.	Key Elements of the Darebin Submission	5
2.	DAREBIN IN A SNAPSHOT	9
3.	GENERAL ISSUES	12
3.1.	Key Underpinning Assumptions	12
3.2.	National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSES D).....	14
3.3.	National Policy, Legislation and Sustainability Targets.....	14
4.	TERMS OF REFERENCE	16
4.1.	Sustainable Cities in Context	16
4.2.	Assumption of Continuing Urban Expansion	16
4.3.	Social and Cultural Sustainability	16
5.	DISCUSSION PAPER - SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025: A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE	18
5.1.	Vision.....	18
5.2.	Preserving the essentials of the ‘Australian Lifestyle’	18
5.3.	Joined-Up-Government.....	20
5.4.	Visionary Objectives	20
6.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 1 – ‘PRESERVE BUSHLAND, SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE AND URBAN GREEN ZONES’	21
6.1.	Bushland.....	21
6.2.	Significant Heritage.....	22
6.3.	Green Zones	23
6.4.	General Comments.....	23
7.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 2 – ‘ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES’	25
7.1.	The Greenhouse Effect.....	25
7.2.	Increasing the generation and uptake of Renewable Energy	26
7.3.	Demand Side Management	27
8.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 3 – ‘ESTABLISH AN INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE WATER AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ADDRESSING CAPTURE, CONSUMPTION, TREATMENT AND RE-USE OPPORTUNITIES’	29

9.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 4 – ‘MANAGE AND MINIMISE DOMESTIC AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE’	31
10.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 5 – ‘DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT NETWORKS, NODAL COMPLEMENTARITY AND LOGISTICS’	33
10.1.	Travel Demand Management.....	33
10.2.	Transport Planning.....	33
10.3.	Infrastructure and Service Delivery	34
10.4.	Freight.....	35
11.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 6 – ‘INCORPORATE ECO-EFFICIENCY PRINCIPLES INTO NEW BUILDINGS AND HOUSING’	36
11.1.	Whole of Life Green Buildings.....	36
11.2.	A Model of an Integrated Sustainability Index.....	37
12.	VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 7 – ‘DEVELOP URBAN PLANS THAT ACCOMMODATE LIFESTYLE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES’	40
13.	CASE STUDIES	41
APPENDICES		42
Appendix A – Darebin Integrated Travel Plan.....		42
Appendix B – Darebin’s submission to ‘Melbourne 2030 Planning for sustainable growth October 2002’		42

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Introduction:

Australia has one of the most urbanised societies on Earth with over 70 percent of all Australians living in cities big or small, and this is increasing. With the advent of economic globalisation, Australia's cities can no longer be regarded as purely domestic in nature. They are central to our ecological, social, and economic well being. However, a comprehensive approach to urban issues has been absent from the National political agenda for over 25 years.

Darebin welcomes the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage *Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025*, which has the potential to initiate a return of urban issues to the national agenda. However Council has a number of reservations about the form of the Inquiry, which if left unaddressed, could defeat its intended purpose.

1.2. Key Elements of the Darebin Submission

The Darebin key elements of Darebin's submission are:

Inadequate Response to an Issue of Major National Importance

2004 is the Year of the Built Environment, and the national spotlight will invariably fall on the lack of a Federal Government vision for Australia's cities. However, the time provided for meaningful discussion and the Terms of Reference for the current Inquiry are manifestly deficient. The combination of these factors can easily lead one to conclude that this Inquiry is a token attempt to bridge a major policy area shortfall.

Paradoxically, the current initiative may have an adverse long-term effect of stifling debate by 'writing off' sustainable cities as having been dealt with by a singular action.

Urban Issues Need an Ongoing National Approach

Australia has one of the most urbanised societies on Earth with over 70 percent of all Australians living in cities big or small. However, a comprehensive approach to urban issues have been absent from the National political agenda for over 25 years. The return of urban issues to the National agenda is welcome, but the current initiative may well be a flawed and counter-productive response to the sustainable urban development challenge.

Urbanism is a major issue in Australia and should be recognised formally through the creation of a Federal portfolio (or similar), that resources and undertakes ongoing research into urban issues (including sustainability); works closely with other levels of government; and advocates at a national and international level.

Joined-Up-Government

Urban issues are an integral part of the National Agenda, and one that transcends all tiers of Government. Not only does there have to be widely recognisable vision for sustainable Australian cities, but such a vision must allow for an approach that acknowledges the diversity of Australian cities and actions relating to local matters. In this sense, any approach needs to be

recognised and accepted by all tiers of government. Initially there needs to be an examination and understanding of what the roles and responsibilities of each tier of Government is in achieving this worthwhile goal.

Fundamental Issues Need to be Debated First

The Inquiry's Terms of Reference and Discussion Paper miss most of the fundamental issues and debates that have to be addressed in order to progress sustainability at a National level. Such matters include inter alia:

- *What do we want to sustain? What is sustainable? What is a sustainable city in the Australian context?*
- *What are the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Federal Government with regard to achieving sustainable Australian cities?*
- *What roles do all tiers of Australian Government have in relation to facilitating a joined-up-Government approach to the creation of sustainable Australian Cities?*
- *What indirect/other policy actions can/does the Federal Government take in order to achieve sustainability?*
- *What are the major impediments to sustainability in the Australian context?*
- *Where are we performing well with regard to sustainability?*

Australia Needs a National Population and Settlement Strategy

Australia must prepare a 'National Population and Settlement Strategy.' Sustainable Australian cities cannot be achieved in the absence of this as a fundamental starting point. Such a strategy must inter alia:

- Be largely based on the ecological carrying capacity of Australia, while also giving serious consideration to the global nature of the population problem and our responsibilities to the region and poorer nations;
- Address housing demand and ways to address shrinking household sizes; and
- Assess ideal population densities for optimising sustainable outcomes including transport, resource use and waste treatment etc

Goal Setting

One of the most important areas for Federal Government involvement in bringing about sustainable cities is through national policy and legislation. A good example of national policy and goal setting by the Federal Government can be found in the National Competition Policy which sets exacting requirements for the assessment of national regulations.

Without national targets or definitions of ecologically sustainable development and social welfare and equity considerations the intent of any Australian Sustainable Cities Strategy would be significantly eroded.

International Participation

Australia must better its track record of participation in the International Sustainability Agenda – including being signatory to international treaties and protocols, such as the United Nations' Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

Flawed Underpinning Assumptions

The Terms of Reference are conceptually flawed in that they make assumptions that there is a general understanding and consensus regarding what a sustainable city is.

Term of Reference No. 4 “measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion” prejudices the Inquiry, as it assumes continuing urban expansion. The Inquiry does not challenge this, and instead accommodates urban expansion with environmental sustainability being woven around this phenomenon.

A Sustainable Australia

The ‘Terms of Reference’ for the ‘Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025’ are limited to examining the development of sustainable Australian cities. The terms of reference must be expanded to examine relationships between cities and regional/rural sustainability. i.e. How can we have sustainable cities unless all of Australia is sustainable?

A Sustainable Australian City Must be Holistic

The Terms of Reference need to be expanded to underscore a holistic vision of an Australian sustainable city – one that is sustainable socially, culturally, ecologically and economically.

Although the ‘Terms of Reference’ touch on issues of equity (with respect to the provision of services and infrastructure) and the social cost of continuing urban expansion, they do not adequately relate to the need to ensure socially or culturally sustainable Australian cities.

Diverse Australian Lifestyles

This Discussion paper’s ‘vision’ of a sustainable city of the future is predicated upon the need to preserve the essentials of *‘the Australian Lifestyle’*. The introduction of ‘the Australian Lifestyle’, and its use as a cornerstone for the discussion paper – or key underpinning assumption - denies the diverse and changing nature of the Australian population. There is no homogenous ‘Australian Lifestyle’ (this is exemplified in Darebin) and if there was, then there are likely to be aspects that need to be modified, as opposed to preserved, in order to achieve a sustainable Australian city.

Consensus and Commitment at all Levels of Government

There are already Local and State Government initiatives to address specific sustainability issues for cities and urban settlements.

Sustainable cities will not happen without an approach which involves consensus at all levels of Government. Australia’s National ESD Strategy was adopted by all three tiers of Government (Federal Government, State and Local) in December 1992 at a meeting of the heads of Government of each jurisdiction. A similar agreement is needed here too.

Discussion Paper: Visionary Objectives

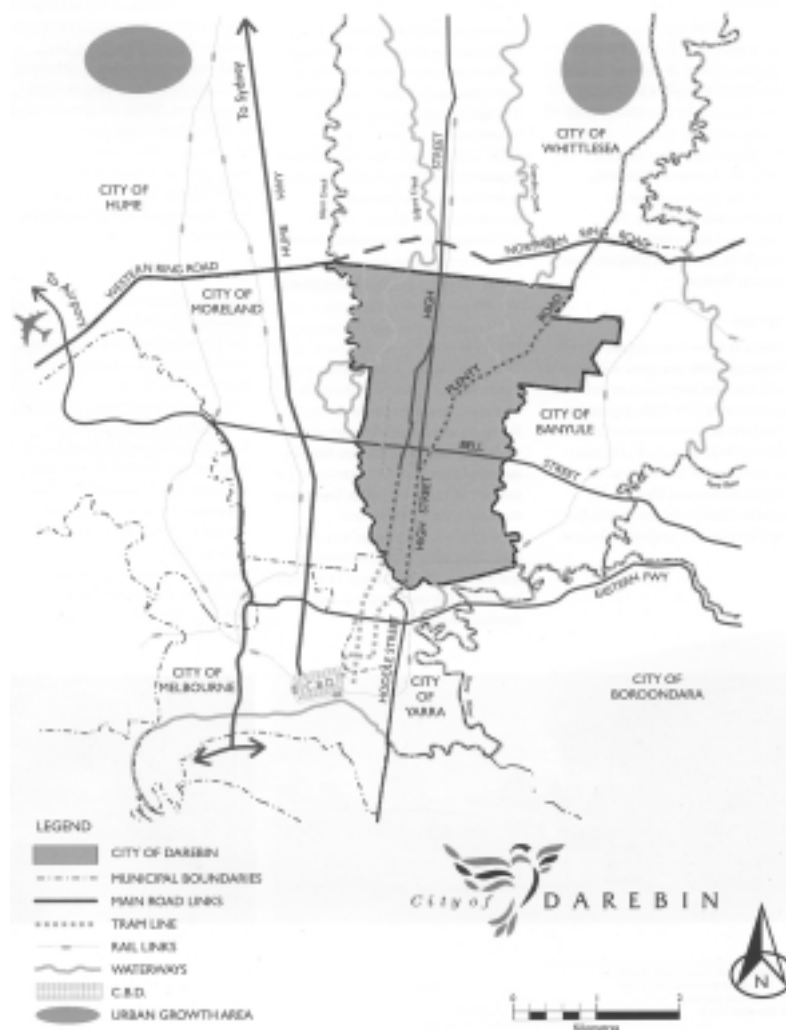
The seven visionary objectives set out in the Discussion Paper do not stand up to scrutiny: it would be possible to satisfy all visionary objectives and yet still fall short of achieving a sustainable Australian city.

Many of the visionary Objectives are problematic in regard to the terminology used, and/or assumptions underpinning them.

The Darebin submission critiques each of the objectives and provides recommendations regarding the actions that the Australian government can take to address these in order to bring about sustainable Australian cities.

2. DAREBIN IN A SNAPSHOT

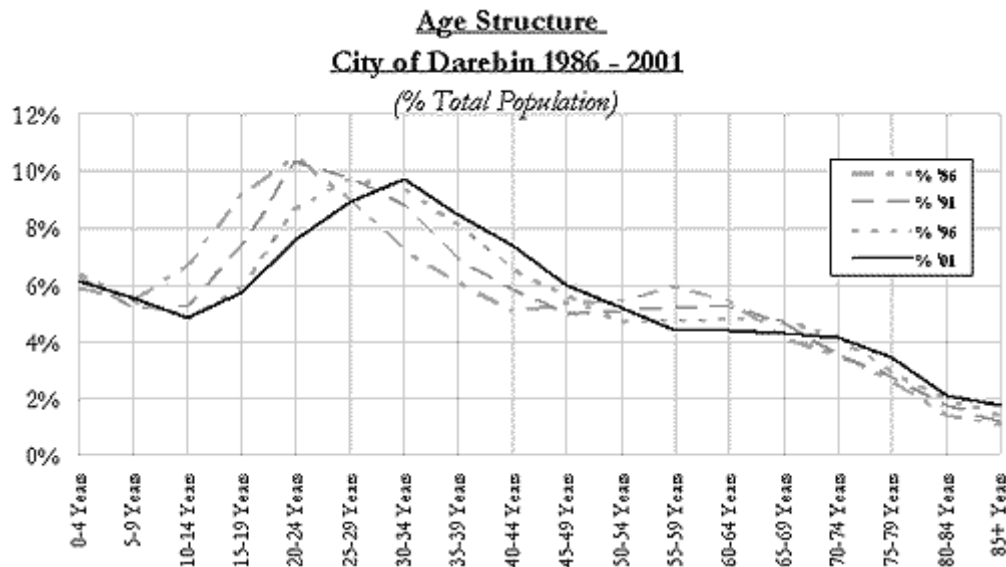
The City of Darebin was created by the State Government of Victoria on 22 June 1994, resulting primarily from the amalgamation of the former Northcote and Preston Councils. Darebin is located to the north of the Melbourne Central Activities District, and covers an area of approximately 53 square kilometres extending from Heidelberg Road in the south, to Mahoneys Road to the north and generally bounded by Darebin Creek to the east and Merri Creek to the west. Darebin contains diverse urban form ranging from inner to middle metropolitan Melbourne including the suburbs of Northcote, Alphington, Fairfield, Thornbury, Preston, Reservoir, Kingsbury and Bundoora. The Melbourne CBD is located 11.1km south of the municipal offices at Preston, and only 5km from the southern municipal boundary.



The City of Darebin has one of the most culturally diverse communities of any Local Government area in Australia. Just under a third of Darebin's residents were born in a non-English speaking country, and approximately 40% of the population prefers to speak a language other than English at home.

The 2002 estimated resident population for the City of Darebin was 127,882.

The aging of the Australian population also impacts on lifestyle choices as well as housing and social needs. The graph below shows Darebin's age structure changes over a fifteen year period.



Source: ABS 2001 Census

Despite high levels of redevelopment occurring in the municipality, the population of Darebin continues to age, with increases in the proportion of the population aged 30 - 54 years and those aged over 70 years. The proportion of young children declined slightly from 6.4% to 6.1%, and there was a marked decrease in the proportion of the population aged in their 20's, down almost 2% from 1996.

The large increases in the adult population aged in their 30's and 40's reflects both the ageing in place of existing populations and the continued migration of new residents into areas of the municipality experiencing urban renewal.

Country of Birth

	No.	Persons			
		% '01	% '96	% '91	% Melb
Australia	74,787	60.9%	61.4%	63.0%	65.7%
Italy	9,059	7.4%	8.4%	9.1%	2.4%
Greece	6,152	5.0%	5.5%	5.9%	1.7%
United Kingdom	2,824	2.3%	2.4%	2.8%	4.7%
China	2,522	2.1%	1.9%	1.1%	1.1%
Viet Nam	2,006	1.6%	1.5%	1.1%	1.7%
All other countries	18,430	15.0%	15.1%	14.2%	17.0%
Not stated	7,041	5.7%	3.8%	2.8%	5.7%
English speaking countries	79,661	64.9%	65.3%	67.3%	73.0%
Non-English speaking countries	36,119	29.4%	30.8%	29.9%	21.3%
Total	122,821	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: ABS 2001 Census

The diversity that has characterised the City of Darebin for some time continues, particularly as the municipality attracts residents from an increasingly broad range of countries. The proportion of the population born in English speaking countries has continued to decline in Darebin in recent years, with just under a third of residents born in non-English speaking countries in 2001.

Declines can be observed in the proportion of Italian, Greek and Macedonian born residents, as residents born in China, Sri Lanka, India, Egypt and the Philippines become more numerous.

Language spoken at home

	No.	<i>Persons aged 5 years and over</i>			
		% '01	% '96	% '91	% Meib
English Only	65,969	53.7%	52.9%	53.2%	69.4%
Italian	14,716	12.0%	14.1%	16.0%	4.0%
Greek	11,447	9.3%	10.1%	10.9%	3.6%
Arabic	4,574	3.7%	3.6%	3.0%	1.4%
Macedonian	3,130	2.5%	3.1%	3.2%	0.9%
Vietnamese	2,365	1.9%	1.5%	1.0%	1.9%
Mandarin	2,257	1.8%	1.4%	na	1.1%
Cantonese	1,544	1.3%	1.1%	na	1.8%
All other languages	10,917	8.9%	8.6%	9.8%	11.2%
Not Stated	5,902	4.8%	3.6%	2.9%	4.8%
Total	122,521	100%	100%	100%	100%

3. GENERAL ISSUES

Before considering the specific issues raised in the *Discussion Paper 'Sustainable cities 2025: A Blueprint for the Future'* Darebin has the following more general comments.

3.1. Key Underpinning Assumptions

Darebin welcomes Federal Government interest in the sustainability agenda, as it applies to Australian cities. However the discourse about sustainable cities has been absent from the Federal Government's agenda for such a long period of time that care needs to be taken with regard to the point at which the debate is resumed.

Darebin is concerned that the stated purpose of the Inquiry which is "...not to set specific action for particular areas, but to provide a 'national map' of issues and approaches" is indicative that the Inquiry is predicated upon an assumption that the national discourse on sustainable Australian cities is at a more mature stage than is the current situation. This means that the discussion paper is both too specific in terms of issues raised, and too limited having missed the main debates that need to be had in order to ensure that the findings of the Inquiry are meaningful.

Moreover, the Inquiry is not the appropriate process to elicit meaningful insight into the questions raised in the discussion paper (due to both the lack of discourse on the assumptions underpinning many of the questions as well as these questions being fielded at the wrong audience).

The rural, regional and global context and Australia's international responsibilities are also a critical component to achieving sustainability.

Australia must actively engage with international treaties and initiatives that contribute to sustainability. This will not only be a positive step in securing the ecological viability of our planet, but will help ensure positive relations and therefore global security. It will avoid the marginalisation of Australian trade on the basis of poor environmental performance. In time, if sustainability is well supported by the Federal Government, Australia has the potential to become a leader in the growth areas of clean technologies and renewable energy.

Recommendations:

The examination of fundamental issues and assumptions should be the starting point for policy development discourse with background research and an Inquiry into questions such as:

- ◆ *What do we want to sustain? What is a sustainable city in the Australian context? (see next section on the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development)*
- ◆ *What are the roles and responsibilities of the Australian Federal Government with regard to achieving sustainable Australian cities?*
- ◆ *Can sustainability be achieved at a National level in the absence of a National Population & Settlement strategy? (such a strategy must be*

largely based on the ecological carrying capacity of Australia, while also giving serious consideration to the global nature of the population problem and our responsibilities to the region and poorer nations. Such a strategy should also examine housing demand and ways to address declining household sizes)

- ◆ *How can the Federal Government facilitate sustainable Australian cities?*
 - *What are its powers and mechanisms to effect change?*
 - *Is legislative change required to enable it to have a more effective role? If so what and how?*
 - *What indirect policy actions can the Federal Government take in order to achieve sustainability (e.g. if there is a national population strategy, are there actions through our immigration policies that can address our declining birthrate with the carrying capacity goal defined in the strategy?)*
- ◆ *What are the major impediments to sustainability in the Australian context?*
- ◆ *Where are we performing well with regard to sustainability?*
- ◆ *Should urban expansion be limited? If it is limited, what are the impacts for housing and land affordability and how can these be addressed (i.e. is legislative change needed? Can the Federal Government do anything from an economic facilitation perspective or through the allocation of funds for particular projects?)*
- ◆ *What roles do all tiers of Australian Government have in relation to facilitating a joined-up-Government approach to the creation of sustainable Australian Cities?*
- ◆ *What is cultural sustainability as a fundamental concept in the Australian context? What is the role of heritage conservation within a culturally sustainable Australian city?*
- *The questions in the discussion paper should be utilised as part of the brief for independent research that examines the way in which Australian cities are currently performing with regard to sustainability including the underlying issues that impact on this, and may impact on possible solutions.*

Once these fundamentals have been established national sustainability targets that effect this should be set with regard to population, housing, public transport infrastructure and usage, freight transportation, biodiversity, urban expansion/consolidation, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, use of recycled and energy efficient building materials, water consumption and recycling, stormwater, etc.

These national targets and the strategies that ensure they will be achieved should then be enshrined in legislation. Guidelines, policies and assistance at the State and Local government levels can then contribute to sustainability in the Cities, Regional and Rural sectors.

- *Australia must actively engage with international treaties and initiatives that contribute to sustainability.*

- *Australian must prepare a 'National Population and Settlement Strategy.' Sustainable Australian cities cannot be achieved in the absence of this as a fundamental starting point. Such a strategy must inter alia:*
 - *Be largely based on the ecological carrying capacity of Australia, while also giving serious consideration to the global nature of the population problem and our responsibilities to the region and developing nations; and*
 - *Assess ideal population densities for optimising sustainability via the support of sustainable transport options, resource use and waste treatment etc*
- *Include regional and rural Australia in the sustainable cities discourse - clearly, Australian cities will not achieve sustainability unless regional and rural Australia is also sustainable.*

3.2. National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSED)

A universal definition of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) was developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development, in *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland report 1987), but the challenge for National, Regional and Local Government is to apply this to the Australian, State and Local context.

The Commonwealth Government has already attempted to do this within the Australian national context through the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSED), which was adopted by Australia's three tiers of Government (Commonwealth, State and Local) in December 1992 at a meeting of the heads of Government of each jurisdiction.

Recommendation:

Utilise all of the principles set out in the Nation Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development to form the basis for the development of a definition of a sustainable Australian city.

3.3. National Policy, Legislation and Sustainability Targets

One of the most important areas for Federal Government involvement in bringing about sustainable cities is through national policy and legislation. The Federal Government through the National Competition Policy has set exacting requirements for the assessment of national regulations which include in clause 1(3) assessing the benefits of regulation, where relevant, to:

- Government legislation and policies relating to ecologically sustainable development;
- social welfare and equity considerations, including community service obligations;

- Government legislation and policies relating to matters such as occupational health and safety, industrial relations and access and equity;
- economic and regional development, including employment and investment growth;
- the interests of consumers generally or a class of consumers;
- the competitiveness of Australian business; and
- the efficient allocation of resources.

Without national targets or definitions of ecologically sustainable development and social welfare and equity considerations the intent of any Australian Sustainable Cities Strategy would be significantly eroded.

Recommendation:

Develop national targets and definitions of ecologically sustainable development.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Council has a number of concerns with regard to the 'Terms of Reference' given to this Inquiry, and its subsequent capacity to provide meaningful insight and direction to the creation of sustainable Australian Cities.

4.1. Sustainable Cities in Context

The 'Terms of Reference' for the 'Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025' is limited to examining the development of sustainable Australian cities. However cities do not exist in isolation from the rural and regional environment: how can we have sustainable Australian cities unless all of Australia is sustainable?

Recommendation:

Expand the Terms of Reference to examine the relationship between the development of sustainable Australian cities and rural and regional areas, or there should be a commitment to do so in the near future as a result of this Inquiry.

4.2. Assumption of Continuing Urban Expansion

Council is also concerned that the Term of Reference No. 4 "*measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion*" prejudices the Inquiry, as it assumes continuing urban expansion. The Inquiry does not challenge this, and instead accommodates urban expansion with environmental sustainability being woven around this phenomenon.

Recommendation:

The notion of continuing urban expansion should be examined by the Federal Government (as discussed earlier with regard for the need to inquire about the concepts underpinning our understanding of sustainability at a national level). Questions need to be examined such as:

- *"Can sustainability be achieved if urban expansion continues?" ; and*
- *"If not, how do we address/manage urban expansion?"*

4.3. Social and Cultural Sustainability

Although the 'Terms of Reference' touch on issues of equity (with respect to the provision of services and infrastructure) and the social cost of continuing urban expansion, they do not adequately relate to the need to ensure socially or culturally sustainable Australian cities. This is particularly reflected in the discussion paper, which focused on environmental sustainability without due consideration of social and economic sustainability which this Council would argue are intrinsically linked to the creation of sustainable Australian Cities. The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSED) could provide a basis for this.

Recommendation:

Expand the Terms of Reference to underscore a holistic vision of a sustainable city – one that is sustainable socially, culturally, ecologically and economically.

5. DISCUSSION PAPER - SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025: A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

5.1. Vision

Council notes that the vision for a sustainable city as set out in the discussion paper appears to be:

"The sustainable city of the future will integrate the built and natural environment. The sustainable city will assist in retaining the biodiversity of Australia, have a developed infrastructure that gives efficient and equitable access to services and utilities, preserve the essentials of the 'Australian lifestyle' and contribute to the economic wealth of the nation."

This statement only goes part of the way to creating a vision of what a sustainable Australian city will do. It would be possible to create a city that does all of the above, but in practice falls short of being a sustainable Australian city. An ecologically, socially and economically sustainable city would contain these elements but, as part of a more holistic model including other ecological, social, economic and ethical considerations.

5.2. Preserving the essentials of the 'Australian Lifestyle'

Moreover, the 'Vision' is predicated upon the need to preserve the essentials of the 'Australian Lifestyle'. The introduction of this concept is problematic. What are the essentials of the 'Australian Lifestyle', if indeed there are any?

The discussion paper itself recognises that *"there are an increasing number of urban dwellers; however this increased population is not homogenous. Rather, the increase in city inhabitants is accompanied by a diversification of lifestyle preferences ranging from high density inner city apartment dwellers to the small acreage on city outskirts to self-contained village type suburban lifestyles."* Diversity of housing choices is however only one indicator of the diversity of Australian lifestyles.

As detailed earlier in this submission, the City of Darebin has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse communities of any Local Government area in Australia. The people living in Darebin come from 148 countries and speak 105 different languages. More than 50% of Darebin residents are either first or second generation migrants from non-English speaking countries.

Darebin's vision is:

A diverse and democratic city where citizens work together to advance community life

The Vision has been carefully constructed to illustrate, with just a few words, our aspirations for the Darebin community.

Darebin is a diverse city, not only in terms of multicultural, language and ethnic diversity, but we are also diverse in socio-economic background, employment

status and occupation, housing needs and preferences and, perhaps most importantly, Darebin's community has a diverse range of opinions, aspirations and expectations.

Diversity is integral to all services and activities undertaken by Darebin. Darebin has a dedicated Multicultural Affairs Unit which advises and assists Council services to achieve access and equity outcomes.

Some of Council's initiatives in relation to practicing diversity include:

- The 'City of Darebin Managing Diversity Conference' 1-3 October 2003 (see <http://managingdiversityconference.com/>)
- Cramer Street Living in Harmony Project
- Multilingual communication service
- Cross-cultural training
- Civic education informing Darebin's citizen's on how to become active participants in their local community and how to influence decisions made at the local level
- Citizenship ceremonies
- Refugee Week
- Cultural diversity week
- Harmony Day
- Festivals and other occasions
- Convening the 'Darebin Ethnic Communities Council' (DECC)
- Convening the 'Darebin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities Council' (DATSICC)

For more information regarding Darebin's diversity initiatives please see www.darebin.vic.gov.au/multicultural/

Of course, although diversity is perhaps most obviously associated with ethnicity, the concept of cultural diversity is not limited to ethnicity alone. Diversity is present in the broader population relating to factors such as gender, income level, sexual orientation, age, education, religion, disability etc.

This demonstrates the conundrum created by the inclusion of an imperative to *preserve the essentials of the 'Australian lifestyle'* within the Discussion Paper's vision of what a sustainable Australian city will do. The introduction of this term, and its use as a key underpinning assumption, of the discussion paper denies the diverse and changing nature of the Australian population.

There is no homogenous 'Australian Lifestyle' and if there was, then there are likely to be aspects that need to be modified - as opposed to preserved - in order to achieve a sustainable Australian city.

Recommendation:

Remove references to 'preservation of essential elements of the Australian Lifestyle' from the definition of a sustainable Australian city.

Develop a new national definition of a sustainable Australian city as part of an Inquiry into the fundamental issues that underpin the development of sustainable cities.

5.3. Joined-Up-Government

The discussion paper acknowledges that there are already Local and State Government initiatives in place aimed at addressing specific sustainability issues for cities and urban settlements *and* that there needs to be a holistic national approach which integrates all components of an Australian sustainable city. Darebin strongly believes any national strategy or model should not result in devolution or cost shifting from the Commonwealth to State and Local Government.

An approach which involves consensus at all levels of Government is needed in order to move towards the establishment of sustainable Australian cities. One example is provided by Australia's National ESD Strategy which was adopted by all three tiers of Government (Federal Government, State and Local) in December 1992 at a meeting of the heads of Government of each jurisdiction.

Recommendation:

Utilise an intergovernmental Agreement (such the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment – IGAE) to provide statutory effect and implement sustainable cities through all levels of Government.

5.4. Visionary Objectives

The seven visionary objectives set out in the Discussion Paper do not stand up to scrutiny. While the objectives are generally positive, they are open ended and it is therefore not possible to identify if and when they are achieved. Even if the existing objectives are amended to become definitive in terms of a sustainable outcome for each issue, it may still be possible to achieve these seven but not to have achieved 'sustainability'

This underscores the need to develop a widely accepted and recognised of what a sustainable Australian city is, and then a set of objectives that if attained, would result in a sustainable city.

Council will critique these visionary objectives in the remainder of this submission, which is formatted in response to each.

6. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 1 – ‘PRESERVE BUSHLAND, SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE AND URBAN GREEN ZONES’

Darebin has some concerns about the terminology that is used in the visionary objective to ‘Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones’. The terminology then permeates the relevant section of the discussion paper.

The objective only relates to preservation, and while this is a starting point, in itself it will only retain the status quo, whereas other initiatives aimed at revegetating, rehabilitating and enhancing habitat to redress prior damage are required.

Recommendation:

Enhancement should be introduced into this objective along with preservation.

6.1. Bushland

The use of the term bushland in the objective appears to be at odds with the discussion of the objectives which states that “...as urban areas expand, a harmonized rather than frontier approach is required to retain Australia’s biodiversity, eco-systems and to provide settlements which can be co-habitated by people, flora and fauna. The urban environment should continue to be uniquely Australian and the features of the landscape should not be ghettoised to isolated non-inhabited parts of the country...” Bushland is archaic terminology that demonstrates exactly the frontier thinking style that the paper proposes that we need to move away from.

Recommendation:

Replace the term bushland with ‘indigenous biodiversity’.

Darebin City Council has had some experience with development in areas of the municipality where species listed under the Environmental Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity Act 1999 (Cwth) have been recorded. The Act does not appear to be well known or understood by developers and there is no clearly defined process through which Local Government as a local planning authority is kept informed of progress and/or decisions made in relation to the Act. From Darebin City Council’s perspective, the potential for optimising the conservation of biodiversity via the Act could be significantly improved.

We would be more than happy to discuss our experience of the EPBC Act and the above recommendations with the appropriate officers.

Recommendation:

Improve the conservation of biodiversity via the Environmental Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity Act 1999 (Cwth) via the following process improvements:

- *Although heavy penalties apply for unlawful action, it would be highly preferable in terms of conservation outcomes to ensure that proactive triggers are as effective as possible. The proponent should remain responsible for applying for determination as to whether an action is a*

controlled action under the Act. However if a local planning authority recommends to a developer that they make a referral to Environment Australia, investigation and follow up action must be taken by Environment Australia if this recommendation is not acted upon in a given time period.

- *Councils should be given access to information kits about the Act to be distributed directly to developers working in areas where species listed under the Act are known to occur or to have occurred.*
- *Introduce requirements for local planning authorities to be kept directly informed of referrals and decisions made under the Act by Environment Australia. Council's could then ensure that our planning processes can, as far as possible, complement (and avoid contradicting) decision-making timeframes and outcomes under the Act.*
- *Provide the local community with good access to public advertisements made in relation to the Act by requiring that advertisements are made available to Councils and placed in local newspapers. In some circumstances, advertisements translated in community languages will also be necessary, and Councils would be in a good position to advise if this is the case.*
- *The planned review of the Act should assess referrals that are deemed to be controlled actions and decisions and conditions applied under the Act and their effectiveness in protecting biodiversity. This review should allow for a more strategic framework for decision-making – resulting in more consistency for developers and better conservation outcomes.*

6.2. Significant Heritage

The *Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999* provides guidance for the assessment, conservation and management of Australia's places of cultural heritage significance. It is internationally recognised through the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) based in Paris. ICOMOS is closely linked to UNESCO, particularly through its role under the World Heritage Convention 1972 as UNESCO's principal adviser on cultural matters related to World Heritage. The *Burra Charter* applies to all types of places of cultural significance including natural, indigenous and historic places with cultural values.

A 'heritage place' is defined by the *Burra Charter* as a "site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, spaces and views." Therefore cultural heritage is not limited to buildings and built form, as the discussion paper seems to do (it refers exclusively to built heritage).

In addition to this, the *Australian Natural Heritage Charter: Australian Heritage Commission 1997* provides the basis for the assessment and conservation of places of natural heritage significance. This *Charter* encompasses a wide interpretation of natural heritage ranging from 'existence' at one end to 'socially-based values' at the other. The fundamental concept of natural heritage, which most clearly differentiates it from cultural heritage, is that of dynamic ecological

processes, ongoing natural evolution, and the ability of ecosystems to be self-perpetuating.

The separation of cultural and natural values can be difficult, and more than one layer of values may apply to the same place (e.g. Uluru is culturally and naturally significant see: <http://whc.unesco.org/sites/447rev.htm>).

Under both Charters, there are no levels of significance for heritage places, but rather types of significance.

The use of the term 'significant heritage' in the discussion paper implies that some heritage places are not significant and introduces a level of discretion that erodes the establishment of sustainable heritage conservation. This is further compounded by the discussion paper only referring to built heritage.

Recommendations:

Replace 'significant heritage' with the more generic and appropriate term 'heritage places'.

Examine the contribution that heritage conservation makes to the development of culturally sustainable Australian cities.

6.3. Green Zones

With no background explanation of what is meant by 'green zone' in the context of this discussion paper, it is very difficult to respond to this part of the discussion paper.

Recommendation:

A clearer explanation of the concept of 'Green zone' or similar should be developed as part of the fundamental concepts that can be drawn upon in order to develop a vision for a sustainable Australian city.

6.4. General Comments

Darebin believes that with refinement this objective is laudable and would like to put forward some additional ideas that may help to modify and refine this objective to provide a better modal to achieve sustainability.

While it is appropriate to examine ways to protect green areas – such as 'green wedges' and through the use of an 'urban growth boundary' in the *Melbourne 2030* (metro strategy) example, the social impacts need to be examined with regard to impacts on housing and land prices.

Moreover, owners and managers of land that is 'locked-up' from development need to be recognised for the role that they are playing as part of the development of a sustainable city – this may mean targeted funding of sustainability projects on the ground and financial assistance.

Recommendations:

Examine methods to encourage the retention and enhancement of biodiversity on private land through incentive schemes for land-owners, in conjunction with specific Federally funded initiatives implemented to assist land owners to increase biodiversity.

Provide recognition to owners of green areas so that the contribution that they make to achieving a sustainable city is recognised.

Examine innovative solutions to provide affordable housing so that protection of green areas does not result in a 'land crisis' that has adverse social impacts (E.g. examine the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement etc).

7. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 2 – ‘ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES’

Darebin believes that the Greenhouse Effect is intrinsic to this objective and that Australia needs to participate in international agreements in relation to climate change if we, as a nation, are to achieve sustainable use of energy. Sustainable energy use requires 100% reliance on renewable energy sources (reliance on fossil fuels is not sustainable) in addition to energy conservation and efficiency measures. Clearly Australia has a long way to go on this issue.

Other actions are needed and these are discussed below.

7.1. The Greenhouse Effect

The greenhouse effect and climate change are crucial issues and significant barriers to sustainability that need to be seriously addressed in any consideration of the sustainable use of energy in Australian cities. It is disappointing that the Discussion Paper refers only to ‘air emissions’ rather than discussing the greenhouse effect.

Our heavy reliance on energy produced from fossil fuels is very greenhouse intensive and not sustainable. Heavy reliance on a non-renewable resource will not ensure a secure energy future for Australia in the middle and longer term.

Leading scientists indicate that a greenhouse reduction of 80% is required in order to protect our climate from further damage. In the light of this scientific concern, large scale concerted efforts and innovation are needed at all levels of Government and across all sectors to address the problem.

Darebin City Council is an active member of the Cities for Climate Protection Plus program and like many Local Governments has set a challenging reduction goal (20% reduction on 1995 levels by 2010). Darebin is undertaking a range of initiatives to achieve this reduction target in Council operations and the wider community. Initiative’s include a Revolving Energy Efficiency Fund for ongoing investment in energy efficiency works in council facilities; purchase of 20% Green Power for street lighting – with a view to increase this to 30% next year; development of an Integrated Travel Plan, a Green Travel Plan and involvement in the TravelSmart program to facilitate uptake of sustainable transport options; development of the Reservoir Civic Centre as a showcase green building; the Community Power project and Home Energy Action and Business Energy Action programs to reduce emissions in the community.

Recommendation:

Australia should adopt a greenhouse reduction target as have other developed nations, and ratify the Kyoto protocol.

7.2. Increasing the generation and uptake of Renewable Energy

Increasing the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) established under the Renewable Energy Electricity Act 2000 (Cwth) to 10% by 2010 will be key to facilitating increased use of renewable energy and a more diversified (and therefore secure) energy base. Renewable targets must be set as a percentage of Australia's total energy consumption rather than a Gigajoule amount so that increased overall energy consumption does not diminish the renewable target. Increasing targets should also be set for post 2010, so Australia's renewable energy industry can continue to grow.

The definition of 'renewable energy' in the Renewable Energy Electricity Act 2000 (Cwth) should be modified to bring it in line with Green Power criteria. This would reduce confusion in the community and would ensure a more sustainable renewable energy industry. Burning native forest woodchips for energy is not sustainable and there are significant levels of public concern over this practice which impacts negatively on perceptions of Green Power.

Consumers currently pay a premium of around 20-30% to take up Green Power in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This premium reflects the fact that renewable energy technologies currently cost more to produce than fossil fuel based energy. Fossil fuel based power sources are well supported by extensive physical infrastructure and institutional support. The total costs of fossil fuels are not currently reflected in the market price of these fuel sources (total costs should take into account the cost of greenhouse emissions and air pollution and clean-up costs of oil spills etc). A carbon tax would help ensure that the market price of fossil fuel based power reflects the true (or more realistic) cost to the community and would facilitate greater production of renewable energy.

Darebin City Council, in partnership with the Moreland Energy Foundation Ltd and the Cities of Melbourne and Yarra, has implemented Community Power, Australia's first aggregated electricity purchasing project for households. Community Power has triple bottom line objectives of competitive prices; greenhouse reductions and fair and reasonable contract conditions. Community Power Energy Plans offer a proportion of Green Power at prices cheaper than standing offer tariffs for 100% conventional electricity – making Green Power more accessible to our communities. Community Power will also be delivering energy management programs to Community Power customers to ensure a holistic approach to wise energy use and greenhouse gas reductions.

Currently, larger scale renewable technologies are far more cost-effective than single dwelling options. Diversification, security, and positive environmental and social outcomes can occur at medium scale production size, particularly in vertically integrated energy systems where generators have a vested interest in demand management (rather than producing and selling more). For example see Sacramento Municipal Utility District <http://www.smud.org/>

Recommendation:

Increase the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target to 10% by 2010 in the first instance with increasing targets set post 2010.

Modify the definition of 'renewable energy' under the Renewable Energy Electricity Act (2000) to reflect the same criteria as the Green Power accreditation program.

Green Power should be promoted more strongly by all levels of Government including the uptake and promotion of Green Power in Government facilities, supporting high profile promotions of Green Power to the community and through investigating incentives and rebates for Green Power uptake.

Return and increasing funding for research and development of renewable energy technologies.

7.3. Demand Side Management

Energy efficiency and demand side management are key components of a sustainable energy industry and need to be strongly promoted through:

- ◆ Government supported education and implementation programs,
- ◆ infrastructure such as smart metering;
- ◆ market mechanisms such as tariff structures that discourage excessive use and reflect time of use;
- ◆ regulatory mechanisms and targets applied at all industry levels from generators, distributors, retailers (as per NSW) and consumers; and

- ◆ The National Energy Market and the National Consumers Electricity Advocacy Panel need to address demand side management as a key priority to ensure a sustainable energy future for Australia.

A range of rating tools is available and regulations have been adopted in various states and at Local Government level to ensure both energy efficiency and overall environmental performance of new buildings (e.g. see BASIX framework in NSW and detailed discussion later in this submission). When energy and environmental targets are regulated, they are an effective way to ensure that existing knowledge and technologies are well applied and that our overall environmental performance is improved. The continual adjustment of targets can result in ongoing improvements.

Recommendation:

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) should be amended to reflect best practice in energy (and eco-efficiency) guidelines and be continually upgraded as knowledge and technology advance.

Adopt a national sustainability rating tool to ensure both energy efficiency and overall environmental performance of new buildings (e.g. see BASIX framework in NSW and detailed discussion later in this submission for information regarding one successful model).

Nationally promote energy efficiency and demand side management through:

- ◆ *Government supported education and implementation programs,*
- ◆ *infrastructure such as smart metering;*
- ◆ *market mechanisms such as tariff structures that discourage excessive use and reflect time of use;*

- ◆ *regulatory mechanisms and targets applied at all industry levels from generators, distributors, retailers (as per NSW) and consumers; and*
- ◆ *The National Energy Market and the National Consumers Electricity Advocacy Panel to address demand side management as a key priority to ensure a sustainable energy future for Australia.*

8. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 3 – ‘ESTABLISH AN INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE WATER AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ADDRESSING CAPTURE, CONSUMPTION, TREATMENT AND RE-USE OPPORTUNITIES’

In order to move towards sustainability Australia needs to:

- move away from relying on potable water for non-potable uses;
- reduce water consumption; and
- move away from the practice of only using water once before it is considered waste and becomes a management issue.

There are many opportunities for the re-use of water for non-potable purposes such as industry, irrigation of parks, propagation of crops, toilet flushing, fire fighting, vehicle washing, etc. Such re-use applications can frequently be achieved with little or no additional treatment.

The discussion paper has assumed continuing urban sprawl, and relation to this objective states *“with urban sprawl and the expansion of low density housing at city outskirts, cities of the future will undoubtedly exceed the existing capacity of surrounding waters supplies and receiving waters. The characteristic approach of many large cities to water and stormwater management (that is, piping in large water supplies and piping out equally large quantities of waste water) cannot be efficiently maintained as the consumption and geographical size of a city expands.”*

Sustainability cannot be achieved if unfettered urban sprawl continues along with increasing water consumption. Consumption levels *and* urban sprawl must be curbed as part of an integrated approach to redress this problem.

Australian urban centres need to play a larger water catchment role for the future. Australian cities are large consumers of water however currently do not play a significant role in our water catchment and supply network. The large expanses of impervious surfaces (roofs, roads, pavements and other hard surfaces) found in cities can be effectively utilised to harvest rainwater for use for non potable purposes. Rainfall harvesting supplements the supplies of potable water and frees up water for improving water body health and for agricultural applications. Rainfall harvesting also has the benefit of reducing the need for costly stormwater management systems.

Rainwater harvesting and water re-use can be undertaken on varying scales ranging from single dwellings right through to whole towns or regions. A combination of legislation (legislating mandatory requirements for new buildings) and financial incentives (encouraging retrofitting of existing structures) is required to bring about real change. Such an approach is currently being adopted by the Victorian Government to a degree with rebates for water efficiency devices and rainwater tanks, mandatory 5 star ratings for new residential developments, and permanent water restrictions.

The low cost of water is currently a significant barrier to water management programs in larger organisations.

Integrated, region wide approaches are required to ensure wise use of water. The Federal Government has a key role as catchments are natural systems and therefore not beholden to arbitrary State and Regional boundaries (e.g. Murray River catchment affects three States) See Victorian Governments *Securing our Water Future - Green Paper for Discussion*.

Appropriate tariffs at the household level can ensure equitable access for essential uses, but should increase significantly for non-essential uses such as private swimming pools and extensive garden use.

Some links/case studies:

<http://www.unep.or.jp/ietc/publications/urban/urbanenv-2/9.asp>

<http://www.asahi.com/english/weekend/K2003051700164.html>

http://www.melbournewater.com.au/content/library/wsud/case_studies/inker_man_oasis.pdf

Recommendations:

Curb consumption levels and urban sprawl as part of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable water usage.

Investigate opportunities for the re-use of water for non-potable purposes such as industry, irrigation of parks, propagation of crops, toilet flushing, fire fighting, vehicle washing, etc.

Utilise legislation and financial incentives to ensure that potable water is not used for non-potable uses (carrot and stick approach). E.g. appropriate tariffs at the household level can ensure equitable access for essential uses, but should increase significantly for non-essential uses such as private swimming pools and extensive garden use.

Develop integrated, region wide approaches to ensure wise use of water. See Victorian Governments 'Securing our Water Future - Green Paper for Discussion'.

Develop and implement integrated, region wide approaches to ensure wise use of water.

Protect Potable Water catchments from logging and other development activities.

9. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 4 – ‘MANAGE AND MINIMISE DOMESTIC AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE’

The discussion paper notes that “Australia is currently one of the highest consuming societies in the world – a reversal of this trend is fundamental to the development of sustainable cities in Australia.” Darebin agrees with this but is disappointed that it is not reflected in the objective, which omits the need to minimise consumption as well as waste.

Demand side management and product custodianship are important priorities that can be addressed through a number of programs e.g. a packaging covenant, producer responsibility for end of life items, levies on plastic bag use – which can then be extended to other disposal items.

The United Nations (UN) have developed and Sustainable Consumption Program through the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The UNEP Sustainable Consumption Program aims to foster “the development of cleaner and safer production and consumption patterns that lead to increased efficiency in the use of natural resources and reductions in pollution.” This may provide a platform for Federal Government with the development of Australia specific programs and targets through a wide range of mechanisms (including legislative change, industry incentives, the removal of disincentives, social security and taxation reform for business and domestic consumption).

The capacity of regional waste management is very much dependent on housing densities and accessibility of waste treatment infrastructure. Assessment of ideal population densities for optimal waste treatment and minimisation and treatment should be undertaken as part of the development of a National Population and Settlement Strategy (referred to earlier in this submission).

Darebin is an active member of the Northern Region Waste Management Group and EcoBuy. Darebin and the Northern Region Waste Management Group support the principles outlined in EcoRecycle Victoria’s Zero Waste Policy.

Recommendations:

Utilise the United Nations’ Sustainable Consumption Program (through UNEP) as a platform for the development of Australia specific programs and targets through a wide range of mechanisms (including legislative change, industry incentives, the removal of disincentives, social security and taxation reform for business and domestic consumption).

Adopt the waste hierarchy of Reconsider, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle at a National level with targets established through consultation with the States and regions.

Develop strong demand side management and product custodianship through a number of programs such as:

- *a packaging covenant;*
- *introduce an embedded energy rating system based on the energy efficiency rating system for consumer goods;*
- *producer responsibility for end of life items;*
- *levies on plastic bag use – which can then be extended to other disposal items;*

- *taxation disclosure legislation that enable consumers and investors to make decisions about the ethical practices of businesses in relation to sustainability measures.*

Provide funding or incentives for new and innovative waste treatment plants such as organic processing – which is currently cost prohibitory at the Local or Regional level.

Assess ideal population densities for optimal waste treatment and minimisation as part of the development of a National Population and Settlement Strategy.

10. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 5 – ‘DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT NETWORKS, NODAL COMPLEMENTARITY AND LOGISTICS’

The Federal Government has the greatest direct influence on this area due to the heavy reliance by States and Territories on the Federal Government for major transport project funding (particularly freight based transport modes).

A combination of approaches is required to ensure that Australian transport moves towards sustainability including; infrastructure investment; travel demand management; tax reforms and incentives.

10.1. Travel Demand Management

Travel demand management and major behavioural change is needed. Car use is currently high in all Australian cities - the change in attitude required is significant. This can only be achieved through the aggressive application of incentives to encourage a shift in attitude and disincentives to reinforce the move from the private car and road based freight transportation, to more sustainable modes.

Intervention is required by the all levels of Government (e.g. Funding for transport projects must be made contingent upon a triple bottom line assessment of each proposal and alternative modes of transport along with assessment against a sustainability index) and further research into current patterns of transport consumption and demand is needed to inform the most appropriate techniques that may affect change and achieve sustainability targets (that also need to be set based on research and international treaties).

Deterrents to private car use could include such things as congestion pricing (or tolling for the use of roads based on congestion levels), parking controls and pricing, taxation including fuel excise and Fringe Benefit Tax.

Recommendation:

Conduct further research into current patterns of transport consumption and demand to inform the most appropriate techniques that may affect change in the Australian context and achieve sustainability targets (these also need to be set based on further research and international participation).

10.2. Transport Planning

In addition, changes in Government policy and the commitment both at a political and bureaucratic level are a key to implementation. All levels of Government must balance the continued development of the road network with the development of alternate modes of transport taking a long term and sustainable approach.

Public transport has a pivotal role in the creation of Australian cities and in such a situation it cannot be seen as welfare transport for those who by age, financial situation or other circumstances cannot obtain constant access to a private

motor vehicle. While overall cost of owning and servicing a private vehicle is not obvious to consumers, public transport usage requires season ticket or upfront fare each time it is used. The costs of roads are conversely not upfront, and where they are, the term 'toll' is used (as opposed to ticket or fare). The upfront cost of using public transport should be reviewed across Australia with alternative cost recoupment measures implemented (e.g. something like the Medicare levy could be used so that the apparent disincentive of having to pay a 'toll' to use public transport is removed or reduced and to encourage use and a sense of ownership by all Australians). A public transport levy system would also substantially reduce the current costs of maintaining cumbersome ticketing and enforcement systems.

More viable sustainable transport alternatives and the consequent reduction in the reliance on private vehicles for travel will also lead to innovative alternatives such as car sharing where people could buy shares in a car and book its use at particular times, rather than purchasing a car. 'FlexCar' in Portland Oregon, US, is a model of this, though other similar ones are used in other parts of the world, particularly Europe. For more information visit: www.flexcar.com).

Recommendation:

Aggressively apply incentives to encourage a shift in attitude (and disincentives to reinforce the move) from the private car and road based freight transportation, to more sustainable modes. E.g. congestion pricing (or tolling for the use of roads based on congestion levels), parking controls and pricing, taxation including fuel excise and Fringe Benefit Tax.

Reduce the disincentive upfront cost of public transport usage through creative solutions such as something like the Medicare levy so that patrons do not have to pay a 'toll' to use public transport while roads are 'free'.

10.3. Infrastructure and Service Delivery

If Australian Government is committed to this change, serious thought needs to be given to paying for the real cost of motorised use of roads. Underpinning the need for change by direct charges for private users is an effective tool.

The benefits in reducing reliance on private vehicle use are manifold and include increased health and safety for the community, better quality of life and well-being, improved air quality and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Cities that are designed for people not cars, will be more sustainable cities.

Darebin has developed an Integrated Transport Strategy "*Going Places – The Darebin Integrated Travel Plan*" (ITP) and it is attached to this submission. The ITP promotes the use of alternative transport modes to the private motor car due to the increasing congestion and road safety issues arising in Darebin. It is also recognised that in a mature urban environment such as Darebin, it is not possible to continually build road capacity to relieve congestion.

Darebin has developed a Transport Management Plan that aims to prioritise bus and tram movement; improve pedestrian access to buses and trams; improve pedestrian conditions; improve cycling conditions; slow the road

environment through shopping centres; and maintain vehicle capacity of the road.

Recommendation:

Funding for transport projects must be made contingent upon a triple bottom line assessment of each proposal including alternative modes of transport, along with assessment against a sustainable transport planning index this needs to be developed).

10.4. Freight

Freight carrying- and commercial vehicles make up 20% of all vehicles on the road and account for 22% of total distance travelled by all vehicles in Australia. Since 1998, the total distance travelled by light commercial vehicles in Australia has increased by 9% while the distance travelled by articulated trucks increased by 8% a trend that is likely to continue. Disincentives for motorised freight travel and increased infrastructure and incentives for freight transport via rail should be key priorities for the Commonwealth. Appropriate taxes or financial disincentives for vehicle freight will also act as an incentive for more localised production which will help create more sustainable cities.

Recommendations:

Disincentives for motorised freight travel and increased infrastructure and incentives for freight transport via rail should be key priorities for the Commonwealth

11. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 6 – ‘INCORPORATE ECO-EFFICIENCY PRINCIPLES INTO NEW BUILDINGS AND HOUSING’

11.1. Whole of Life Green Buildings

The Discussion Paper focuses on introducing ESD to new buildings and Greenfield development with not enough emphasis being placed on retrofitting built-up areas to achieve more sustainable environmental outcomes.

When considering a triple bottom line approach, green building technology results in a positive environmental outcome. It may also lead to positive economic effects as the building industry benefits by becoming more competitive in sustainable building technologies that will most certainly be a growth industry in the future and through reduced running costs for householders.

This style and philosophy of development will benefit our environment, and will result in housing options that are more cost-effective over the longer term and that provide healthier and more comfortable living environments. While green buildings will in general cost less to run and maintain, impacts on the affordability of housing in the shorter term must also be considered.

The technology and knowledge to develop sustainable buildings exists, as is demonstrated in the 60L Case study attached to the Discussion Paper. Darebin City Council’s Reservoir Civic Centre is also an excellent example of a show case green building that is being used for educational purposes within the community and further afield: <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/rcc/>

The commercial building sector has considerable environmental impact, but positive change appears to be slower in this sector than for housing.

While a number of green showcase examples exist, uptake by the building industry is neither as comprehensive nor as quick as it could be.

Incentives for renovations and retrofits of existing buildings are particularly important as these buildings are generally not affected by the introduction of new standards.

The following recommendations and examples should help to provide direction on ensuring that building and development achieves sustainability objectives.

Recommendations:

Eco-efficiency needs to take into consideration the use of materials as well as energy efficiency measures – i.e. avoiding timbers from native forests, optimising use of recycled materials, avoiding materials with high embodied energy.

Introduce comprehensive sustainability labelling of housing stock and commercial buildings (such as the expansion of the energy star rating system to

other issues such as water use and run-off, materials, biodiversity etc) so that consumers can easily compare the environmental value of different options.

Use rating tools for commercial buildings such as the Australian Building Greenhouse Rating Scheme, the Green Building Council green star rating tool and NABERS need to be promoted, used more widely and then regulated for in the near future.

Provide support and incentives for education of the building industry such as the successful Green Plumbers program is an important component of moving towards a more sustainable built environment.

Expand rebate schemes such as the photovoltaic rebate scheme and State programs for solar hot water systems to offer additional incentives for sustainable initiatives that exceed regulatory requirements.

Examine the use of the negative gearing provision in the taxation system to encourage sustainable renovation of existing building stock through the removal of current financial disincentives.

Develop strategies to address the short-term, impacts on the affordability of housing.

Develop a framework that looks at key sustainability issues and provides a combination of clear requirements and flexibility for implementation is required in order to advance sustainable housing techniques.

11.2. A Model of an Integrated Sustainability Index

Regulatory structures that promote sustainable building in all sectors are necessary in order to ensure that available technologies are incorporated. Regulations should be consistent across Australia (to create more security for the building industry) and be flexible enough to take into account local conditions. The BASIX system introduced into NSW is an example of such a system, however other States are yet to develop such a comprehensive model and it only relates to residential development.

In Victoria, measures to ensure more efficient use of energy and water in new homes are being introduced. By July 2004 a four-star energy rating for all new residential buildings and some water saving initiatives will be required under the the Victorian Building Regulations with an increase to 5 star by July 2005., and the Victorian Building Regulations also promote and encourage the inclusion of new energy efficiency standards for commercial development in the Building Code of Australia (BCA). There is opportunity for the Federal Government to strengthen this and amend the BCA to reflect best practice in eco-efficiency guidelines and for the BCA to be continually upgraded as knowledge and technology advance

There needs to be a mandatory ESD framework for *all* new developments and re-development, such as the one developed by Planning NSW which allows for flexibility and innovation within a local context. Planning NSW developed the BASIX sustainable building tool to assist architects, builders and developers to define, demystify and standardise better development practices in areas such as water, energy, waste and land use across NSW.

BASIX is a comprehensive web-based planning tool for Council and proponents of residential dwelling types that are detached dwellings, villas, town houses and multi-unit apartments:

The nine (9) BASIX indices are:

- Site:** which recognises the sustainability benefits of urban renewal over Greenfield developments. Encourages minimal site disturbance while maximising landscape and biodiversity.
- Social** promotes affordable adaptable and accessible housing. Encourages mixed use development.
- Transport** encourages a reduction in car parking provision where good public transport is available and accessible. Promotes safe and accessible facilities for all walking and cycling and public transport users.
- Water** recognises the reduction in potable water demand associated with the application of water efficient fittings and appliances. Recognises value of substituting mains potable water with harvested or recycled water where appropriate.
- Stormwater** recognises the performance of on-site quantity and quality control measures associated with the proposal in relation to downstream infrastructures and natural systems.
- Energy** recognises the reduction in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the application of energy efficient fittings and appliances. Promotes the use of renewable energy.
- Waste & Recycling** promotes waste minimization through well designed development. Promotes reuse and recycling of materials and buildings.
- Materials** recognises the environmental impact associated with production, transport and use of building materials. Encourages material reuse and recycling.
- Indoor Amenity** promotes naturally ventilated and day-lit buildings above mechanical ventilation and lighting systems. Encourages material selection that minimises indoor air pollution.

Once entered, BASIX applies base-line resource and utility data to show developers how their project rates on the system's integrated sustainability index. Developers are required to score an overall sustainability index in order to achieve a planning approval. Local authorities can modify the weighting where appropriate: e.g. stormwater may rate higher in flood prone areas. Developers can consider a mix of measures that are most cost effective and/or most appropriate in local context, block design etc.

It is noted that BASIX does only apply to residential development, and in order to achieve national sustainability, the agenda needs to be inclusive of all

development – However BASIX is a start and a model that provides a sign post for the development of more far reaching sustainability tools for all types of development.

In order to ensure that ESD principles are incorporated into all new developments we feel that a framework such as BASIX needs to be implemented at a National level. This would provide regulatory certainty for the building industry as well as flexibility for planning authorities and developers.

Recommendations:

Amend the BCA to reflect best practice in eco-efficiency guidelines and continually upgrade it as knowledge and technology advance.

Develop a robust and mandatory regulatory ESD framework that promotes sustainable building in all sectors in order to ensure that available technologies are incorporated in new development and re-development. (such as the BASIX model developed by Planning NSW which allows for flexibility and innovation within a local context).

12. VISIONARY OBJECTIVE 7 – ‘DEVELOP URBAN PLANS THAT ACCOMMODATE LIFESTYLE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES’

The ‘*accommodation of lifestyle and business opportunities*’ is a problematic objective to achieve sustainability. As discussed earlier in this submission, the people of Australia have varied and diverse lifestyles and there is need for behavioural change in order to achieve sustainability. Moreover, it may not be possible to achieve sustainability if certain lifestyle choices are continued unchallenged.

The discussion in relation to this visionary objective (*‘Develop urban plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities’*) concentrates on lifestyle and residential development at the expense of business sector participation and reform. The focus appears to be on business location in sustainable or green buildings, but clearly sustainability needs to include sustainable and ethical business practices.

Importantly, ethical business practices and disclosure laws needs to be built into the way that we as a nation do business, and consume goods. This assists to increase choice for both the community, government, non-government organisations, investors and the private sector.

Recommendation:

Develop a legislative framework to enable consumer and investor assessment of ethical business practices.

Develop legislative and financial incentives to encourage ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable business practices at a local and regional level.

Support the research and development of new ecologically sustainable technologies and products.

Investigate the cultural impacts of economic policy and examine ways to encourage social and cultural sustainability through economic policies.

13. CASE STUDIES

Council is pleased that there are two Australian examples provided in the case studies attached to the Discussion Paper, however it is however disappointing to note that there is no Australian example of a sustainable transport strategy.

Darebin notes that Perth appears to be the only Australian City that is undertaking large scale sustainable transport initiatives through the construction of new large scale rail projects. Although the Victorian Government's Melbourne 2030 Strategy sets the goal that *"by 2020 the Government intends that public transport's share of motorised trips within Melbourne will rise to 20 per cent from the current level of 9 per cent..."* a clear process and strong 'on the ground' commitment to attainment of this objective is yet to materialise.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Darebin Integrated Travel Plan

**Appendix B – Darebin’s submission to *‘Melbourne 2030
Planning for sustainable growth October 2002’***
