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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Sustainable Cities

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage

August 2005  
Canberra

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ISBN 0 642 78665 5 (printed version)

ISBN 0 642 78666 6 (HTML version)

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## Foreword

Australia, like other countries around the world, is facing an immense challenge - to create sustainable cities for the future.

As one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with water shortages, transport congestion and high energy demands, Australia must take action now to address how our cities might develop in the future.

This committee's vision is for Australian cities that are vibrant and healthy - environmentally, socially and economically. Working towards this goal is not the responsibility of governments alone. It is the responsibility of all Australians and must be a priority for all Australians. The committee was heartened to see the commitment and dedication displayed by many individuals and organisations.

What is missing is coordinated and concerted action. This committee believes that that there is a need for the Australian Government to assume a leadership role. Accordingly, the committee's most important recommendations concern what form such leadership might take.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage of the 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament began this inquiry. The current committee recognised the important work the previous committee undertook and chose to continue the inquiry. On behalf of the committee of the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, I would like to thank the previous committee for its important contribution, and particularly the Chair, the Hon Bruce Billson MP.

Dr Mal Washer  
Chair





# Membership of the Committee

## 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament

Chair Dr Mal Washer MP

Deputy Chair Ms Jennie George MP

Members Mr Russell Broadbent MP

Ms Kelly Hoare MP

Mr Harry Jenkins MP

Hon Jackie Kelly MP

Hon Duncan Kerr MP

Mr Stewart McArthur MP

Mr Malcolm Turnbull MP

Mr Jason Wood MP

## 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Chair Mr Bruce Billson MP

Deputy Chair Ms Jennie George MP

Members Mr Phillip Barresi MP

Mr John Cobb MP

Mr Greg Hunt MP

Mr Harry Jenkins MP

Hon Duncan Kerr MP

Mr Peter Lindsay MP

Ms Kirsten Livermore MP

Mr Stewart McArthur MP

## Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Mr Ian Dundas
Inquiry Secretary	Ms Julia Thoener
Research Officer	Mr Robert Little
Administrative Officer	Mrs Marlene Dundas



## Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on issues and policies related to the development of sustainable cities to the year 2025, particularly:

- The environmental and social impacts of sprawling urban development;
- The major determinants of urban settlement patterns and desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;
- A 'blueprint' for ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement, with particular reference to eco-efficiency and equity in the provision of services and infrastructure;
- Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and
- Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.





## List of abbreviations

ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARTC	Australian Rail Track Corporation
BASIX	Building Sustainability Index
BCA	Building Code of Australia
BCP	Better Cities Program
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DAF	Development Assessment Forum
DOTARS	Department of Transport and Regional Services
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FAGs	Financial Assistance Grants
FBT	Fringe Benefits Tax
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HERS	House Energy Rating Software
HIA	Housing Institute of Australia
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environment Initiatives

LCA	Life Cycle Analysis
LGA(s)	Local Government Area(s)
LGPMC	Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council
MRET	Mandatory Renewable Energy Target
NABERS	National Australian Built Environment Rating System
NAEEEP	National Appliance and Equipment Energy Efficiency Programme
NatHERS	Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme
NCC	National Competition Council
NCP	National Competition Policy
NFEE	National Framework for Energy Efficiency
NWI	National Water Initiative
PCA	Property Council of Australia
PIA	Planning Institute of Australia
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PVRP	Photovoltaic Rebate Programme
R & D	Research and development
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SoE	State of the Environment
STEG	Septic Tank Effluent Gravity
STEP	Septic Tank Effluent Pump
TBL	Triple line reporting
UFP	Urban Frontiers Program
WELS	Water efficiency labelling and standards
WSAA	Water Services Association of Australia
WSUD	Water Sensitive Urban Design





# List of recommendations

## 3 Governance and policy frameworks – developing a national approach

### Recommendation 1 ..... 31

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- establish an Australian Sustainability Charter that sets key national targets across a number of areas, including water, transport, energy, building design and planning.
- encourage a Council of Australian Governments agreement to the charter and its key targets.

### Recommendation 2 ..... 32

The committee recommends that all new relevant Australian Government policy proposals be evaluated as to whether they would impact on urban sustainability and if so, be assessed against the Australian Sustainability Charter and the COAG agreed sustainability targets.

### Recommendation 3 ..... 36

The committee recommends that:

- the Australian Government establish an independent Australian Sustainability Commission headed by a National Sustainability Commissioner;
- task the Commission with monitoring the extent to which Commonwealth funds and State and Territory use of Commonwealth funds promotes the COAG agreed sustainability targets; and
- task the Commission with exploring the concept of incentive payments to the States and Territories for sustainability outcomes along the lines of the National Competition Council model.

<b>4</b>	<b>Planning and settlement patterns</b>	
	Recommendation 4 .....	58
	The committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services raise with the Development Assessment Forum the proposal to extend membership of the forum to representatives from the Department of Environment and Heritage and the CSIRO.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Transport</b>	
	Recommendation 5 .....	64
	The committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services, in consultation with the Department of the Environment and Heritage, investigate options to extend the Roads to Recovery programme to include other modes of transport as a step towards including sustainability in the funding criteria.	
	Recommendation 6 .....	70
	The committee recommends that:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ transport infrastructure planning decisions be benchmarked against the recommended Australian Sustainability Charter; and</li> <li>■ the Australian Government significantly boost its funding commitment for public transport systems, particularly light and heavy rail, in the major cities.</li> </ul>	
	Recommendation 7 .....	73
	The committee recommends that the provision of Australian Government transport infrastructure funds include provision of funding specifically for sustainable public transport infrastructure for suburbs and developments on the outer fringes of our cities.	
	Recommendation 8 .....	77
	The committee recommends that the Australian Government review the current FBT concessions for car use with a view to removing incentives for greater car use and extending incentives to other modes of transport.	
	Recommendation 9 .....	78
	The committee recommends that the Australian Government review the tariff policy on four wheel drive vehicles with a view to increasing the tariff rate on four wheel drive vehicles, except for primary producers and others who have a legitimate need for four wheel drive capability.	

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**Recommendation 10..... 81**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide adequate funding to develop new programmes and support existing programmes, such as TravelSmart and the National Cycling Strategy, that promote and facilitate public and active transport options.

**Recommendation 11..... 84**

The committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services investigate developing emission standards for older vehicles and work with the States and Territories with a view to instituting mandatory testing and reporting at point of sale.

## **6 Water**

**Recommendation 12..... 93**

The committee recommends that COAG, as part of the National Water Initiative, fund an education campaign educating the public about the benefits, economics and safety of using recycled water.

**Recommendation 13..... 96**

The committee recommends that the National Water Commission, in consultation with the States and Territories and the public, prepare an independent and transparent report on water options for each of the Australian capital cities and major regional centres.

**Recommendation 14..... 98**

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Heritage undertake a public education campaign to increase community awareness of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Scheme.

**Recommendation 15..... 102**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure research and development regarding water resource management takes into account Water Sensitive Urban Design principles.

**Recommendation 16..... 104**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission research, either as part of the National Water Initiative or separately, to consider the economic viability and environmental benefits of decentralised water management systems.

## 7 Building design and management

### Recommendation 17 ..... 106

The committee recommends that the Australian Government encourage the States and Territories to mandate disclosure of the energy efficiency and greenhouse performance of residences at point of sale and point of lease.

### Recommendation 18 ..... 111

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, possibly through the CSIRO, investigate the value of a mass balance analysis for Australia.

### Recommendation 19 ..... 114

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with the Housing Industry of Australia, CSIRO and other industry and scientific bodies, investigate the establishment of a 'sustainable building material' labelling system.

### Recommendation 20 ..... 120

The committee recommends that the Australian Government encourage the States and Territories to put in place a regime whereby approval for major residential and commercial renovations is conditional upon meeting energy efficiency and greenhouse performance requirements.

### Recommendation 21 ..... 122

The committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Heritage and the Australian Building Codes Board work with industry groups to raise awareness among builders, architects and developers of the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable building practices, including reusing and recycling building materials.

### Recommendation 22 ..... 126

The committee recommends that the Australian Building Codes Board develop a nationally consistent building ratings tool that takes into account the range of environmental and sustainability factors dealt with by existing codes.

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**Recommendation 23** ..... 129

The committee recommends that the Australian Government increase the First Home Owner grant to \$10,000 for those homes that meet a high standard of specified sustainability criteria and that these criteria be:

- stringent; and
- within the abilities of an HIA accredited builder.

**Recommendation 24** ..... 129

The committee recommends that those States and Territories that do not have a 5 star rating system implement one as a priority.

**Recommendation 25** ..... 131

The committee recommends that Australian Government departments and agencies that own property take steps to improve the sustainability of those buildings, at least to the 5 star rating, and that departments and agencies that rent property consider measures to improve building efficiency when seeking tenancy agreements.

## 8 Energy

**Recommendation 26** ..... 135

The committee recommends that the Australian Government double the photovoltaic rebate to further encourage the uptake of photovoltaic systems.

**Recommendation 27** ..... 137

The committee recommends that the Australian Government further develop its commitment to energy sustainability, particularly in the area of increasing the use of renewable energy.

**Recommendation 28** ..... 139

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the National Framework for Energy Efficiency, examine the economic and environmental benefits of decentralised energy delivery and encourage investment in this area.

**Recommendation 29** ..... 147

The committee recommends the Australian Government investigate US and German initiatives in the area of solar energy generation and purchase, and, where appropriate, implement or emulate them.

## 9 Research and Feedback

### Recommendation 30 ..... 151

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- conduct an audit of existing research and funding opportunities for issues relating to the built environment and urban policy to ensure the adequacy of technical and policy research in this area; and
- give consideration to nominating the built environment as a national research priority.

### Recommendation 31 ..... 155

The committee recommends that, with reference to the Swedish model of environmental objectives, the Australian Government:

- develop an accessible and identifiable set of national environmental (or sustainability) objectives for Australia (based on the Australian Sustainability Charter recommendation in chapter 3);
- implement a national report card for Australia which represents transparently and simply our progress towards the objectives; and
- encourage similar programmes at a community level, possibly emulating the Tidy Towns or Celebrate WA programmes, but focusing on sustainability.

### Recommendation 32 ..... 156

The committee recommends that Australia investigate opportunities to establish a Sustainable Cities network across Australia and Asia, and extend its regional and international commitment to urban sustainability through avenues such as:

- Technology and research exchange;
- Pilot demonstration projects, particularly in the area of water and waste treatment;
- Increased aid for social development in urban areas; and
- Local government partnership programmes.