Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025

Submission on Discussion Paper to Environment and Heritage Committee, House of Representatives.

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Regarding visionary objectives for the Australian sustainable city:

The wording of the visionary objectives is somewhat stale in places. The incorporation of more forceful, active, visionary wording would strengthen the visionary objectives as just that. For example, objective 4, *Manage and minimise domestic and industrial waste* could be made more innovative by using language like: *Promote, create and utilise sustainable methods of domestic and industrial waste management.*

Objective 1 - Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones

- This objective should be expanded to 'preserve **and enhance**', and the summary should include 'fauna' in the wording.
- The promotion of physical activity through recreational use of bushland and green zones, as well as recreation-specific land, should be included in this objective.

Objective 2 - Ensure equitable access to and efficient use of energy, including renewable energy sources.

- The promotion of renewable energy sources should be included in this objective.
- The use of financial incentives, including subsidies and rebates, should be considered as methods to promote and increase the uptake of renewable energy sources.
- Domestic energy acquisition through on-site solar panels should be promoted through the possibility of receiving credit for unused electricity entering the grid.
- Renewable energy generation should be promoted at BOTH the single dwelling level and across city regions. Renewable energy should ultimately become the norm, not the alternative.
- Higher efficiency standards should be mandated for all new dwellings, appliances and business operations. Databases of suppliers of 'green' products should be established. Financial incentives should be introduced to offset extra expense of energy efficient products (where they are more expensive).

Objective 3 - Establish an integrated sustainable water and stormwater management system addressing capture, consumption, treatment and reuse opportunities

- This objective should also include sewage management.
- A combination of residential water management systems would be most efficient and sustainable. This would include water saving tap and showerheads, promotion of water efficient appliances and practices (indoor and outdoor), promotion and awareness of grey-water systems, and re-use of treated wastewater.
- New development needs to adhere to standards developed to minimise waste and storm water. These standards should include water saving taps and showerheads in all dwellings, education and promotion of water savings techniques and behaviour, timed garden watering systems, and retention basins built into new properties to prevent water runoff from the property. This also provides the occupant with non-mains water and gives them water responsibility.

Objective 4 - Manage and minimise domestic and industrial waste

- This objective should incorporate an aspect of **reducing** the production and consumption of materials and products that become waste.
- Education, incentives and penalties (including financial disincentives like packaged food incurring a levy additional to the non-packaged price) should be used to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change in regards to waste. Promotion and education should begin with primary-school aged children and include all age groups and socio-economic groups.
- The reduction of domestic waste could be achieved by a user pays system (eg plastic bag levy) and by a producer-pays system (deposit system for drink containers eg South Australia); and by provision of alternatives (individual or community composts; provision of calico bags). A user-pays system will also be an effective method of encouraging the reduction of industrial waste.

Objective 5 - Develop sustainable transport networks, nodal complementarity and logistics

- The ideals of this objective need to be addressed and compulsorily included in planning and new development.
- The reduction of automobile dependence can be addressed in numerous ways. These methods need to be seriously considered for new developments to encourage more diverse and sustainable transport networks.
    - Reduction of provision of car facilities (like more and bigger roads, car parking facilities, etc) needs to happen, as such provision increases the use of cars. Therefore, limiting the increases of these facilities will limit the increase of car dependence.
    - Public transport needs to have improved quality and user-friendliness, and reduced cost. The various modes of public transport should also utilise integrated ticketing and timetables to make smooth and easy transitions between modes for multi-modal trips.

        - Tolls for private vehicle use in traffic hotspots (eg city centres) will reduce vehicle use in those areas.
        - Planning of developments so that the highest attainable percentage of residential dwellings are within walking distance from public transport stops/stations and shopping facilities
        - The mandating of cycle-ways and well-lit walkways for all new developments.
    - Government needs to spend less money on new roads and more on public transport and other alternative transport. Also, a financial incentive tied to vehicle registration should be employed for more energy and environmentally friendly private vehicles.
    - Serious consideration needs to be given to the use of rail over road for more freight/industrial purposes. The benefits of this include increased road safety, reduced road maintenance costs, and reduced noise pollution.

Objective 6 - Incorporate eco-efficiency principles into new buildings and housing.

- A higher standard of eco-efficient planning mandatory requirements will ensure integration of eco-efficiency into new buildings.
- Cost savings per year should be highlighted to promote eco-efficiency innovations. Comparisons to non-eco-efficient designs should be made.
- Concessions or a credit system with Development Applications for new developments that include sustainable innovations will be an incentive for more sustainable developments. Mandating a high level of sustainability for all new developments will ensure a higher level of eco-friendliness of developments.
- An increase in the promotion and labelling of eco-friendly building and other products, along with an easily recognised labelling standard (potentially something like the Heart Foundation's 'tick') will ensure that the use of eco-efficiency materials and designs are maximised.

Objective 7 - Develop urban plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities.

- Diversity of zoning and facilities will promote and accommodate different lifestyle needs of Australians in cities. This means adequate infrastructure within walking distance for residential areas, including local shops (mall shopping centres need to be minimised wherever possible, with the goal of reducing the need for private transport), recreational facilities, and public and active transport facilities (again to minimise the reliance on private cars by enabling alternative transport in all possible situations).
- Urban sprawl needs to be minimised: new development applications should show that development's eco-friendliness; also, favour should be shown to developments that reduce urban sprawl by proposing medium-density dwellings.
- The creation of local communities and 'villages' create a sense and responsibility of community ownership of environmental and health issues.

- Creating communities around public transport nodes are essential to overcoming the unsustainable car culture currently possessed by Australian cities.