

SUBMISSION FOR INQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into planning for Australian cities of the future. I make this submission both as a town planner and social planner and as someone who has lived in three Australian cities – Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney.

The “National Map” of issues and approaches needs to provide a framework which is easily incorporated into the community regardless of its locality. The “national map” may need to be prepared for a metropolitan urban model and a smaller urban model which could be applicable to communities within a larger urban area or large regional or district towns. Such an approach could also be utilised for smaller urban areas as the way the centre should seek to grow.

It is pleasing to note that social considerations are incorporated as a key point in all the terms of reference in considering the future of urban environments. That one of the key points is that cities must meet social as well as economic needs is a significant step in strategic planning. However, the social focus seems to have been lost within the “visionary objectives” of the “Sustainable Australian City”. The objectives in the Discussion Paper seem to overlook the most important element of a city - its people – residents, businesses and visitors.

The sustainable Australian City should also seek to provide:

- An urban area which facilitates community infrastructure and networks;
- An urban area which is an attractive, safe and a pleasant place to live;
- An urban area which incorporates the human element into the physical landscape as well as in the provision of services and facilities;
- An urban area which engenders civic pride in urban communities and therefore community contribution/participation in a proactive rather than reactive manner; and
- Diversity in its individual elements be they associated with topography (e.g. coast or mountain), or cultural (e.g. cultural background or residents makeup), etc however as a whole provide all services and facilities equitably for existing and future residents.

The following comments are made in relation to the visionary objectives identified in the Discussion Paper.

1. Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones.

Green Zones

With increasing densification of urban areas, through urban consolidation and higher density housing in all areas of the City, there is a need to ensure that green zones, of appropriate size to meet local and regional open space and recreation, as well as environmental requirements are met. There is a need to consider “green zones” or green links in established urban areas as well as in newly developing areas.

The primary purpose of the “green zone” may determine its ability to be a dual use space. If it is to preserve a significant or endangered environmental area, for its biodiversity or fauna attributes, then use for recreational opportunities may be limited. However, the concept of investigating dual use should not be dismissed in any allocation. There already exist numerous examples of where infrastructure and

drainage systems have been incorporated with recreational facilities (such as bike and running tracks).

The pressures of urban development place at risk the natural environment, particularly remnant vegetation and ecological communities. It is imperative that these communities are maintained, where appropriate, to provide balance in the environment. Partnerships with private landholders and developers can only occur once a strong system, or Government stance, is in place in relation to remnant and biological communities. It is rare for individual landholders or developers to voluntarily preserve and maintain, at their expense, such significant elements of our environment.

In the 1970's and 1980's and subsequently updated throughout the 1990's, there were several guidelines prepared on standards for the provision of public open space. Such standards identified the appropriate provision of the various forms of open space in newly developing areas, be it a playground and local park, tennis or basket ball courts, to skate ramps, BMX tracks and regional open space. Many of these standards, or updated versions, are still in use today and provide a good generic planning tool. However there is difficulty when applying these standards in established urban areas. The developing communities of 2010 and 2025 will be of different demographic and cultural makeup to those of the past and any future guidelines or standards need to provide flexibility to ensure that if the new development is predominantly older people, then the recreational needs are appropriately met.

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

All future development should consider energy efficient building materials, energy sources and appliances. However, whilst such materials and approaches are still in the infancy stages of development introduction of such requirements should come in the form of rate or fee relief or reduction, subsidised by the Commonwealth, at the development approval stage. As technology progresses to the stage where the use of such materials and resources are similar in price to traditional means, then a more mandatory approach can be made to ensure people chose resources and materials more responsibly.

Renewable energy generation should be encouraged at the single dwelling level, the local government level and city-wide.

For people to make informed decisions there is a need for more information and education of the community on how to make development more energy efficient. Since the introduction of water restrictions in the major metropolitan areas over the past few years, residents and businesses are being educated on water saving devices and techniques and will continue to be more aware of their levels of use and responsible use. Strong education and policy programs, such as Landcare, have resulted in significant voluntary community involvement and implementation.

All levels of Government should provide the lead in the use of renewable energy sources, from public transport services to powering public buildings.

5. *Develop sustainable transport networks, nodal complementarity and logistics.*

The majority of public transport is focussed on transporting people from the suburbs into the city. Very few cross town transport systems exist, and those that do are very time consuming and irregular. Some local government areas (such as Lane Cove Council and parts of Brisbane City Council) provide local transport services or shuttle buses for their community (from residential areas) to the key focal points such as schools, pools, libraries, community centres, shopping centres, entertainment centres. Others, such as the City of Adelaide, provide free buses which do a loop of the city on a regular basis providing transport for workers, tourists and shoppers within a radius of the City Centre. Such localised cross transport systems encourages less reliance on cars and an easily accessible and useable alternative.

7. Develop urban plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities

The concept of urban hubs is excellent. They will provide a range of services and facilities and develop strong communities in areas outside of the main centre. In developing this concept it is important that each hub is equitable in its provision of services. To make each successful and individual, each hub needs to have a defined character or role, which can be developed with existing communities and service providers, such as the old local area planning model. A defined character and role will ensure that each hub is not competing at the expense of another and that the individuality of each community is recognised. It is important that each hub address social services, such as health, education, recreation, entertainment as well as employment and transport considerations for each community.

It is also important that each hub have a soul, not a contrived master planning model.

In developing models for the future development of a city, it is important to acknowledge that not all people wish to live in designated areas and that the matter of housing choice should not be restricted to hubs. Future planning must also recognise that there will always be people who will have other housing or living preferences and that these preferences also require appropriate planning.

General

It is imperative that any Federal Government direction, either policy or statutory, needs to also provide resources for implementation at the State, regional and Local level.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025. I look forward to further discussion on this exciting topic.

Yours faithfully

Margot Black