PIA POSITION

PIA believes access to housing and shelter is a basic human right and that the planning profession has the skills and responsibility to influence the direction of housing development to promote sustainable communities. Access to good quality affordable housing should be promoted through choices of tenure such as home ownership, public and private rental and not for profit organisations.

Planners, in conjunction with allied professionals, are uniquely positioned to shape sustainable functional communities that must include adequate supply of housing in close proximity to employment, public transport, community facilities and services. Planners enable diverse housing options through managing our urban development to adapt satisfactorily to changing lifestyles, an ageing population and shifts in the labour market. Housing policy must address housing choice, design, provision of green space, location and proximity to services, which all collectively contribute to ensure sustainable communities.

PIA calls for the following actions to provide access to good quality housing to all citizens:

1. The development of a coherent national housing policy, where social need drives policy.
2. All jurisdictions to review and, if necessary, amend their planning and development legislation to confirm that planning legislation considers social diversity as a valued attribute of sustainability which must be addressed in the formulation of planning strategies and policies.
3. Federal and State Governments to continue to implement the National Affordable Housing Agreement and National Partnership Agreements on social housing, homelessness and indigenous Australians living in remote areas.
4. Renewed commitment for State and Federal funding for infrastructure to support new community development and renewal, particularly in regional and disadvantaged areas experiencing housing market decline and failure.
5. No further decline in public and social housing provision, including stock numbers and quality, as a consequence of reduced public funding.
6. Ensure that public housing stock/resources are not used to cross subsidise other “affordable” housing initiatives in ways that reduces the viability of the public housing or its ability to cater for current unmet and future need.
7. The development of national standards / expectations for housing diversity, flexibility and tenure mix.
8. Housing policy to incorporate housing and design requirements regarding housing for an ageing population and for people with a disability, including location to transport, community facilities and associated services.
9. Through planning policy and regulations, ensure that new residential developments are not isolated from community services, have access to public transport, and provide built and natural environments that promote physical activity.
10. Policy support and public subsidy for environmentally sustainable energy and water savings technology in new residential development at domestic and neighbourhood levels.

POLICY PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

An effective and efficient housing market is characterized by a number of properly harmonised policy elements including:

HOUSING STOCK

- Housing supply must not only meet demand but be able to adapt to changing community needs including household size.
- Ensure housing offers a diversity of styles and tenure to meet changing household profiles and stages of life; things like flexible and adaptable housing forms and modest designs.
- Housing designs must address the nature of the local climatic conditions; incorporate appropriate design, materials and technology to achieve greater environmental sustainability and reduced ecological footprint; and be adaptable to the likely impacts of climate change.

LAND RELEASE

- Brownfield sites and intensification must be targeted and take preference over fringe greenfield sites wherever possible because these areas tend to be located within housing markets of high demand, are better serviced by infrastructure and
public transport, and are accessible to jobs, education and services. Reducing the need for new greenfield land release can preserve biodiversity and agricultural land and promotes more efficient infrastructure expenditure.

- Land speculation undermines the timely supply of housing land when it is needed. Progressive increases in land taxation and other measures should be implemented to reduce land speculation on large sites that are “in sequence” and/or within any urban growth boundary. Authorities should identify these and notify the owners.
- Adequate buffer stocks of greenfield land must be kept and used as last resort
- Land release in growth areas must be sequenced
- Generally out-of-sequence developments should not be allowed to be developed. Developers who have the benefit of an existing approval should be required to invest in the urban infrastructure necessary to support an expansion of housing.
- It is vital that a balance be achieved between the timely provision of transport infrastructure and urban land release.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Strategic planning processes must consider homelessness and include provisions to address the needs of homeless people.
- National policy must be framed to address and alleviate homelessness, including the provision of shelters.
- Policy must avoid spatially segregated communities that amplify disparities of opportunity and income. This can be achieved through measures such as mandatory earmarking of land to be set aside for affordable housing, or requirements for developers to show how they are providing for housing of different tenures and price points (above a threshold development site, 10 dwellings is a typical benchmark internationally); a presumption against gated estates; policies to ensure equity of access to services, transportation, education, employment and natural amenities
- Planning regulations to support innovative housing design that creates more housing opportunities for low-income groups, elderly households, and others with special housing needs, including people with a disability.

PIA ACTION

PIA will lobby all levels of government to improve the access of all citizens to quality housing through submissions, advocacy forums, and membership of relevant national and state/territory committees, such as the National Housing Supply Council, ACIF, ASBEC and the COAG planning taskforce.

PIA will also seek to work with government and industry to develop:

- A national training package for urban planners on addressing housing diversity, choice, and affordability through strategic land allocation and development assessment processes, setting of design controls and establishing development contribution requirements.
- A national training package to support development / housing industry awareness of diverse housing designs, designs for climate sensitivity and environmental performance, tenure mix, how to better deliver housing choice to the market and opportunities for partnerships with government and non profit providers.

THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM

PIA Liveable Communities (2004)
PIA Affordable Housing Position Statement (2007)
PIA submission to Senate inquiry into Affordable Housing (2007)

Refer also to PIA Housing Markets Position Statement (2010)