NSW Settlement Planning: ‘Eco Towns’

Background

The Metropolitan Plan for Sydney relies on more intensive use of land and the take up of capacity in existing infrastructure to accommodate increased densities. The Plan also provides for Growth Areas in the North West and South West sectors. The Government has indicated its intention to consider additional urban fringe development in conjunction with the metropolitan urban consolidation strategy.

There are social, infrastructure, economic, environmental sustainability and equity implications of additional fringe development. There are similar planning issues with urban consolidation as well as community resistance to higher densities in inner and middle ring areas.

Regional Plans have been prepared for rural, regional and coastal areas with strategies for housing, employment and infrastructure. The pressures being experienced in rural, coastal and regional areas require a focused government approach. This is to ensure that lifestyle trends such as ‘sea’ or ‘tree’ change are managed; intergenerational job opportunities are secured; existing and new communities grow together; the natural environment is protected; the effects of climate change are addressed; and the economic future of those areas is sustainable. These pressures, and the issues for metropolitan area growth, demand a long term commitment and a variety of responses under a State Settlement Policy.

Position Statement

1. PIA NSW considers that urban consolidation with urban fringe growth should not be the primary or only long term planning strategy for addressing future growth of the Sydney metropolitan area and that targeted urban growth outside the metropolitan region should complement urban consolidation/fringe development to deliver additional economic, social and environmental benefits.

2. PIA supports the adoption of an overarching State Settlement Policy as part of the State Plan that brings together the Regional Strategies across NSW and the Metropolitan Plan. The State Settlement Policy would address how urban growth management should occur, linking urban consolidation, urban fringe development and regional settlement planning.

3. PIA NSW considers that the ‘Eco Town’ concept should be actively pursued as part of a State Settlement Policy to deliver one or more new satellite towns outside the Metropolitan region of at least 15-20,000 new homes with infrastructure and employment for the residents and its hinterland. This will involve a time horizon of around 40 years.

4. PIA NSW promotes the establishment of ‘Eco Towns’ to serve as a base for new housing and employment within 2-3 hours commute of the metropolitan area. They would provide an alternative option for housing future population growth around Sydney as well as support the revitalization of regional centres. They can be new urban areas of mixed density close to existing centres or additions to the urban area of existing centres. The concept need not follow the UK or European models of eco-towns. They are intended to exploit the potential to create a complete new settlement to achieve zero carbon development, integrate with intra and inter regional connectivity, provide for affordable housing and employment and foster more sustainable living using the best new urban design and architecture.
5. The key features are:

- places with a separate and distinct identity but with good links to surrounding towns and cities in terms of access to jobs, transport and services;
- the development as a whole to achieve zero carbon emission and to be an exemplar in at least one area of environment technology with the highest standards of sustainability and as models for new technology use and healthy urban lifestyles;\(^1\)
- a good range of facilities within the town including a secondary school, shopping, business space and leisure facilities;
- a major employment generator within or nearby such as a government department, private industry or university;
- between 20 and 30 per cent affordable housing with a good mix of tenures and size of homes in mixed communities; and
- a delivery organisation to manage the town development and provide support for people, businesses and community services, incorporating resident involvement.

\(^1\) Refer to Healthy Spaces & Places Website [www.healthyplaces.org.au](http://www.healthyplaces.org.au).