Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division)

Submission: Sydney over the next 20 Years – A Discussion Paper (May 2012)

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,300 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues. This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute.

1.0 Introduction

The NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA NSW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the ‘Sydney over the next 20 Years’ Discussion Paper and fully supports the NSW Government’s commitment to the development of an integrated planning, transport and infrastructure strategy for Sydney. PIA NSW recognises that a new Metropolitan Strategy will form an important role in the Government’s proposal to deliver integrated strategic planning in relation to land use, transport and infrastructure investment provision.

PIA commends the Department for its approach in inviting public and professional input as the earliest step in the development of a new Metropolitan Strategic Plan.

At the outset, PIA observes that the Discussion Paper appears to stand in isolation of the review of the Planning System. This is unfortunate as the Planning System Review heralds a new approach to strategic planning in NSW. Moreover, the direction of the Discussion Paper seems to be little more than an evolution of the previous Metropolitan Plans going back to the County of Cumberland Plan. PIA believes that the new Metropolitan Strategic Plan must be positioned as a ‘step change’ in the way planning for our global city of cities and its hinterland is to occur.

Planners are not the paragons of vision for our urban future. The Institute recognises that there are many viewpoints to be reconciled and aspirations to be weighed against practical considerations. Nevertheless, PIA proposes that the new Metropolitan Strategic Plan should be a bold statement to address the paramount issues that are likely to determine Sydney’s future. The Metropolitan Strategic Plan should therefore address the following issues:

A. Represent the embodiment of the new Planning System in terms of the way strategic planning, development management and environmental protection occurs;

B. Identify the location of the Second Sydney Airport which will have the single greatest impact on the future direction of new housing, infrastructure, regional and global connectivity and jobs growth for Greater Sydney; and
C. Determine the new arrangements for Local Government for the Metropolitan Area (if not the State). This new arrangement will determine regional groupings for resolution on matters such as water catchment, waste disposal, bus services, housing and community health programs and community infrastructure funding across a subregion. The new structure will determine outcomes for governance, sub-regional strategic planning, community infrastructure delivery, local and regional approvals, asset management, cross regional and local transport, recreation and other community services.

These three initiatives will set the new Metropolitan Strategic Plan apart from its recent predecessors that largely accepted the status quo.

The Metropolitan Strategic Plans of the past have been couched in planning or development terminology that professionals in the industry are comfortable with but the documents can be confusing and detached from the lives of people who will be most directly affected by the Plan. Our communities may feel alienated and disenfranchised from the tools that comprise the NSW Planning System. The new Metropolitan Strategic Plan should be framed and presented in a way that is meaningful and legible to most people. Such an approach is consistent with the Institute’s advocacy for cultural change in the way planners and the Government engage with our communities.

The new Plan could contain a section at the front that says what sort of a metropolitan city we want then describe how that metropolitan city will be delivered to create liveable communities, business prosperity, housing choice, job opportunities and a sustained natural environment.

**Imagine**-

A metropolitan city where I will:

- Be able to buy a house;
- Be able to open a business;
- Be able to get around easily and safely;
- Be able to enjoy the harbour, rivers and bushland;
- Get a job that I want near to where I live;
- Live in an area with a nice community feeling where people talk and walk along the streets;
- Be proud to be part of a multicultural, global city with all that it has to offer; and
- Live close to schools, shops, medical facilities and parks.

The Metropolitan Strategic Plan should then set out how the boxes will be ticked to achieve these goals. The detail occurs through the Sub-Regional Plans and Local Plans provided for under the new Planning System.

PIA would suggest that part of the next process in the development of the Plan would be to include an exercise with a team of young University students across various disciplines (economics, social psychology, planning design, engineering and environmental science) who can envision different futures and solutions for the Plan.

Business as usual is not a plan for Metropolitan Sydney.

The Institute does not propose to respond to the particular questions posed in the Discussion Paper but has prepared a submission focussing on the primary themes of the Paper. We would see the draft Strategic Plan covering a series of short technical papers on each theme in an appendix and concluding with the implications of the ‘do nothing’
through to ‘radical options’ and final preferred outcome to be adopted in the Plan. This approach is necessary to enable non-planners and those outside the property industry to also understand the rationale behind the preferred direction.

The themes represent the measures required to achieve the overarching aspirations for the Plan and are not ends in themselves.

In respect of each theme, the Institute raises the key points that the new Strategic Plan should consider and address.

2.0 The Primary Themes for the Metropolitan Strategic Plan

2.1 Housing

The priorities that should be pursued through the new Plan are summarised below:

i) The Plan should identify the particular locations, timing and expected number of dwellings where housing growth is to occur according to:
  - Designated urban release greenfield or fringe Growth Areas;
  - Infill development including centres and major corridor growth; and
  - Identification of a new ‘ecocity’ or new growth area outside the Greater Sydney Area that will need planning now to accommodate housing and jobs over the next 50 years.

This does not imply setting arbitrary targets but ensuring that increases in population density only occur if it can be established that the social, physical, environmental and economic needs of those growing communities can be met and sustained;

ii) The Plan will acknowledge that there needs to be a balance between infill housing growth and designated urban release area housing growth. Urban sprawl is an unacceptable solution so accommodating housing growth in infill areas should continue to occur;

iii) An option is that development for infill areas demonstrate what public benefits will be delivered by the State and local councils for the established areas in terms of improved services, public domain, public transport, energy and water conservation, utilities and amenity;

iv) Housing in release growth areas will only occur in conjunction with public transport, community facilities, shops, utilities and services being in place within 2 years of building commencement;

v) All areas across the metropolitan area will make provision for housing choice in terms of mix of housing types, provision for adaptable housing and affordable housing; and

vi) Increasing supply of housing on its own is not a sufficient mechanism to increase the amount of affordable housing. The new Plan needs to identify the measures to influence the provision of more affordable housing either by incentives (such as property tax credits) or regulation.
2.2 Jobs and Economic Opportunities

The Metropolitan Strategic Plan should demonstrate how jobs growth can occur (the drivers for economic activity) and where the priority areas for employment by type and sector are to occur under the Plan (based on the drivers in each location).

The priorities that should be pursued are:

i) A program by industry sector and location for Western Sydney;

ii) Jobs growth only near public transport nodes or corridors. A gradual spread of economic centres will undermine an efficient public transport system. This means that a concentration of activity should be the primary goal to maximise the efficiencies of investment and infrastructure;

iii) Commitment to delivering the Northern and Southern Freight Corridors;

iv) Promote ‘Activity Clusters’ for sectors that benefit by agglomeration with support services and infrastructure provided through the Plan to promote the cluster. This can occur by:
   1. Research on the key growth sectors and if there are particular requirements for example, access to a specialised labour force, proximity to training, and access to housing for employees;
   2. Identifying their infrastructure needs for example, high speed public transport or road links to particular markets, access to sustainable water and energy supplies and other utilities;
   3. Implementing specific planning policies that support the land uses; and
   4. Identifying what synergies there are with local communities and businesses.

v) The Plan must provide a blueprint for infrastructure delivery as the guide for business investment;

vi) The typology for Centres needs to be refined to identify where major new economic activity will be supported: Sub Regional Centres where major growth in retail and business is to occur; Major Centres where consolidation and edge growth should be planned and Specialist Centres where the specialist sector needs to be specifically supported;

vii) The Plan should be specific about prohibiting out of centre retail and business activity that can undermine the hierarchy, reduce the value of investment in infrastructure and mislead the market about what is feasible and what is not;

viii) Plan for the trends in economic development ahead of the changes. For example, there may well be a significant increase in office demand after the GFC retracts so provision must be made in major centres for that growth to be accommodated in floor area, height and other standards. Balanced against this is the trend to greater use of personal technology that will change the way office activity occurs and therefore the way buildings may be designed;

ix) Protect industrial employment lands from incursions of housing, retail and office uses that should be located in Centres; and

x) The location of key worker, knowledge worker and ‘blue collar’ worker housing and access to transport from that housing to job is inextricably linked with the development potential of employment lands and business centres. The Plan should identify the primary labour force locations relative to the main employment lands and
provide for either housing in close proximity to all economic activity points or identify how the location of the labour will be directly and conveniently accessible to the workplace.

2.3 Transport

The new Plan should provide for the following priorities:

i) The Institute supports the integration of the proposed NSW Transport Master Plan with land use strategies for centres, housing, major recreation facilities, education facilities and economic development. The Plan should clearly indicate how the two policies are being integrated;

ii) The Plan should establish a long term commitment to the establishment and protection of freight hubs and corridors to provide certainty for transport. Wherever possible, freight movement by rail should take precedence over road transport;

iii) As indicated in the Introduction to this Submission, the State and Federal Governments must proceed with planning, land reservation/acquisition, infrastructure programming and delivery of the Second Sydney Airport;

iv) The Plan should contain a map showing all major transport initiatives over the next 5, 10 and 20 years as a time series for delivery;

v) The Plan should identify integrated networks of inter-modal transport hubs where housing and commercial development can occur to support the public transport infrastructure;

vi) A priority for the Transport Plan component of the Metropolitan Strategy must be the introduction of an inter-modal ticketing system to make public transport seamless and to enable the option of changing trip behaviour (time / direction) through ticket pricing;

vii) Promoting active transport as an important part of the overall strategy to complement public and private vehicle transport; and

viii) Identifying modal split targets for centres and supporting programs to achieve those targets such as Green Travel Plans, parking demand management, on-street parking restrictions and provision of commuter parking in outer areas at rail / bus nodes.

The Institute believes that the following projects should underpin the new transport directions for Metropolitan Sydney:

- The Second Sydney Airport and linkages to the orbital system as well as freight corridors with the roles of Kingsford Smith and the new airport;

- Creating a new radial public transport system (rail and bus transit) focussed on the metropolitan cities of Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool in addition to the Sydney CBD;

- Planning for a new ‘metro’ rail / light rail network for the entire inner metropolitan area with connections to the heavy rail network for the middle and outer metropolitan areas at major transport hubs;

- Commence planning for heavy rail corridors beyond the NW and SW Growth Areas to extend the currently planned links to new release areas; and

- Investigate the feasibility of a separate fast train system between Sydney and Canberra, and Parramatta and Newcastle, within 15 years. This will require
reservation of corridors, designing new interchanges, undertaking the environmental studies and community engagement as well as identifying funding sources. Major new termini at Parramatta and Newcastle could provide an opportunity for sale of airspace development rights to assist in funding.

2.4 Infrastructure

The priorities for the new Plan under this theme are:

i) Identify the new funding mechanisms to deliver each new project under the Plan. This will include estimates for all major projects, responsibilities for funding and sources of funding. The Institute would welcome investigation of mechanisms such as value capture for land use up-zoning, the use of growth bonds and tax credit systems, limited private sector financing for State infrastructure and an appropriate level of debt funding. The State Infrastructure Strategy must be directly referenced to the Metropolitan Plan infrastructure projects;

ii) Ensuring that economic development (commercial and housing development) does not proceed unless there is funding, agency commitment and a clear timing program for infrastructure provision. Any project approval must mandate the delivery of infrastructure in parallel with commencement;

iii) Infrastructure delivery plans need to account for maintenance and replacement costs as part of the life cycle costs of a project;

iv) Developing a new system for funding of local community infrastructure that does not rely simply on rates income or development contributions. This is likely to involve a transfer of additional funding from the Commonwealth or expanding the capacity of local communities to generate income for asset maintenance and delivery;

v) The management of waste disposal in Sydney is reaching crisis point as landfills are due to close within the decade and the introduction of alternative waste technology (AWT) is not occurring. The new Plan should indicate:

- Where a new landfill site to serve Sydney into the future will be developed
- How the transfer stations that are now in private ownership will facilitate use of the existing landfill capacity and new landfill site
- How AWTs such as the Eastern Creek UR3R facility can be improved and new facilities developed
- What measures need to be introduced to support the recycling and greenwaste reuse industries; and

vi) The Plan needs to set a clear vision for adopting an increasing use of renewable energy as the future for Greater Sydney. Decentralised renewable energy systems need to be developed with the energy retailers for major energy consuming centres such as CBDs and employment zones. New programs are required to support households and businesses shifting to a renewable energy future. Similarly, programs that support water conservation will be required over the life of the Plan to reduce reliance on the desalination plant and dam catchment supplies. Stormwater and grey water treatment facilities need to be incorporated into each economic precinct and in high density residential areas to enable water recycling and reuse.
2.5 Social Inclusion

The priorities of the new Plan under this theme should be:

i) Designing or redesigning suburbs as ‘liveable communities’ with better accessibility, access to open space and services, management of traffic and parking, improvements to the public domain. This should be a new program implemented jointly between the State Government and local councils in consultation with communities;

ii) Rethinking the SEPP (Seniors Living) approach to planning for seniors focussing on the entire community not just individual projects. This will require a holistic approach to precinct planning that covers ageing in place, community transport, access to shops and parks, access to community health services and opportunities for community engagement;

iii) The Plan should adopt a program for planning for healthy places following the recommendations in the documents Healthy Spaces and Places- A National Guide to Designing Places for Healthy Living (2009)\(^1\) and Healthy Urban Development Checklist (2009)\(^2\). The program should particularly address planning for children and for healthy lifestyles through the design of local areas across the metropolitan area; and

iv) The Plan should herald a new integrated approach to the use of schools and public health facilities as multi use hubs for other forms of social interaction. These places can play a greater role in bringing cohesion to a community rather than as single function facilities.

2.6 Environment and Natural Hazards

The priorities of the new Plan under this theme should be:

i) Developing a metropolitan central data base on the environmental values and constraints of each locality (bushfire hazard, flood liability, contamination, threatened species, soil characteristics, etc.). This data can be used as a register for public and agency access for decision making on land use and development; and

ii) The data base under i) will allow local authorities and state agencies to determine protection measures or guidelines for change that can be used in identifying development or no development areas as well as assist in the development planning and approvals stage of projects.

2.7 Rural and Resource Lands

The priorities that should be pursued through the new Plan are:

i) Protection of the Sydney Basin and outer metropolitan areas for food production through:
   - Mapping of all medium to high value land
   - Agreement on protective measures
   - Incentives to maintain the land for agriculture (agricultural land is not urban and ‘in waiting’)  
   - Controlling pressures on the use of valuable food lands to change to urban activities

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• Recognising the long term necessity of retaining such land for climate change adaptation purposes; and
ii) Precluding the ability for exploration and resource extraction in suburban areas.

2.8 Regional Connectivity

Considerable work has been undertaken on the preparation of Regional Strategies across NSW. The Metropolitan Strategic Plan is a vital part of the jigsaw.

The Institute urges the Department to continue with its recognition of the interdependence of regions. This is one way that the Strategy can help grow and diversify the economies of the regions around Sydney.

The priorities that should be pursued through the new Plan are:

i) Identifying a location to establish a major new employment and housing centre outside of the Metropolitan Area to be complementary to the metropolitan growth. The planning for such a centre should start within the life of the next Metropolitan Plan so that there is future capacity once the NW and SW Growth Areas are delivered;

ii) Ensure that there is a coordinated system of inter-regional rail links between all major centres including express services;

iii) Research the connectivity gaps for businesses in regional areas and how the gaps might be addressed by new or adjusted services to support businesses;

iv) Set a new role for Department of Trade Investment Regional Infrastructure and Services to identify and secure major job attractors to locate on regional centres that have good rail access into the Sydney Metropolitan Area;

v) Delivery of the second Sydney airport to open up more connections to regional centres; and

vi) Delivery of a staged system of very fast trains linked first to Newcastle then to Canberra with stops at key economic growth points, including the second airport.

2.9 Implementation

The priorities under this theme are:

i) For the Metropolitan Strategy to have sufficient authority as a basis for government decision making, the Institute believes that the final Plan should be endorsed by Parliament with approval of any change also by Parliament. This will elevate the status of the Plan to succeed any change in Government over the life of the Plan and will provide a greater level of certainty;

ii) Each government agency including state owned instrumentalities and Government Departments needs to develop a business plan demonstrating how the Strategic Plan will be delivered. Those business plans should be endorsed by Cabinet with advice from each Director–General. The business plans will incorporate a community engagement strategy and provision for stakeholder workshops on each project or groups of projects informing the parties about the expected public outcomes, timing and approvals process;

iii) It is not clear how the Metropolitan Plan will integrate with the proposed NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan or the State Infrastructure Strategy in so far as it relates to the metropolitan area and regional connections. The three documents must be unified into a single holistic plan rather than stand as three separate strategies;
iv) The Discussion Paper makes passing reference to the timeframe that the framework of state strategies encompasses. What is missing and should be included in the Metropolitan Strategy is a definitive timeline of delivery dates for sub regional strategies and plans so that all government agencies, the private sector and local councils can align their strategic planning processes with that of the State;

v) The Institute considers that the development of the new Metropolitan Plan provides an appropriate opportunity to foreshadow a new structure for local government in the Greater Sydney Area. The restructure would have regard to the recommendations of the Destination 2036 Draft Action Plan (December 2011).

vii) The Discussion Paper makes some reference to the timeframe that the framework of state strategies encompasses. What is missing and should be included in the Metropolitan Strategy and Regional Strategies is a definitive timeline of delivery dates for certain strategies and plans so that local councils can align their strategic planning processes with that of the State.

The concurrence of the new Metropolitan Plan and the new Planning System also presents an opportunity to rethink the significant role that local government has in the future of Sydney and implementing the future for the metropolitan area. A strategy needs to take a broader perspective in some parts while still being focussed on the practical considerations in others. If new ideas cannot be promoted in strategic plans as potential responses to changing societal needs then how can we expect the decision makers to come up with creative solutions? Strategy should dictate long term financial planning not the other way around.
3.0 Conclusion

The Institute commends the Department for its work on the new Metropolitan Strategic Plan.

In particular, the Discussion Paper envisages broadening the scope of the Metropolitan Strategy to consider the relationships between Sydney and the surrounding regions. The Institute supports this approach.

To deliver positive change for the metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Strategy needs to be a document that the community can talk about and believe in.

The Institute would propose that the final document for public release be no more than an A3 fold out brochure with a plan of the metropolitan area and a list of the main delivery items, cost and timing, and supported by technical papers and evidence-based planning.

The Institute would be pleased to meet with the Department to discuss any components of this submission and the Institute looks forward to engaging further on a revised Metropolitan Strategy.

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President

29 June 2012