Local Strategic Planning

Background
The Institute has advocated for an overhaul of the NSW Planning System with a shift in emphasis from development assessment to strategic planning. This has occurred at a time when economic conditions have challenged the priorities in planning. New environmental issues, including climate change, have become prominent and social impacts relating to affordable housing, access to jobs and services and an ageing population have necessitated innovative responses by all levels of Government.

For the purposes of this policy statement, the goals of local strategic planning are to protect significant aspects of the local natural and built environment, guide the efficient and effective use and distribution of scarce resources at a local level and also guide the delivery of key infrastructure for the benefit of the local communities. Strategic planning is necessary to properly inform the content of statutory planning instruments that are used for State, regional and local planning. An outline of the ‘NSW Strategic Planning Framework’ is provided below.

Figure 1: NSW Strategic Planning Framework
The Local Government Act 1993 sets out requirements for ‘Integrated Planning and Reporting’, particularly the preparation of a Community Strategic Plan. All NSW Councils are required to prepare a suite of documents under the Act including a Community Strategic Plan, a Delivery Program and an Operational Plan. The Community Strategic Plan can incorporate the findings and strategies resulting from local strategic planning, as follows:

1. A Community Strategic Plan is a plan that identifies the main priorities and aspirations for the future of the local government area covering a period of at least 10 years from when the plan is endorsed.
2. A Community Strategic Plan is to establish strategic objectives together with strategies for achieving those objectives.
3. The Council must ensure that the Community Strategic Plan:
   a) Addresses civic leadership, social, environmental and economic issues in an integrated manner;
   b) Is based on social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights;
   c) Is adequately informed by relevant information relating to civic leadership, social, environmental and economic issues; and
   d) Is developed having due regard to the State Government’s State Plan and other relevant State and regional plans of the State Government.

Position Statement

PIA NSW supports a renewed emphasis on strategic planning at all levels of planning and particularly the local level which can have the most immediate impact on local communities. Strategic planning at the local level must be relevant, rigorous and well researched as the basis for planning and development decisions, as outlined within the Development Assessment Forum’s Good Strategic Planning Guide (2001).

State and local government planners, planning consultants and academics involved in planning research are the primary sources of local strategic planning studies, however, other professionals and local communities can play an important role and contribute to such work. It is multi-disciplinary in nature and requires consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Local planning studies require appropriate levels of research and data analysis, review of futures scenarios, options development, community and stakeholder engagement and, frequently, reconciling competing planning outcomes. Effective community engagement can assist in facilitating greater acceptance and enhance the likelihood of there being support for actions taken in the future during the implementation stages (development approvals and infrastructure delivery).

Sound local strategic planning relies on the commitment of financial resources and skilled planning professionals to help communities plan for their local areas. Up-skilling of planners and the dedication of resources to facilitate local strategic planning need to be recognised as a responsibility to be shared between State and local government.

Better strategic planning at the local level can be achieved by sharing access to research and data held by Government agencies. Similarly, Councils often possess a wealth of information that is valuable for State and Federal strategic planning, as well as to assist the work of planning professionals.
Access to Planning Data

PIA NSW believes that a central data base of research, reports and studies needs to be established. This repository should be electronically based with web access and be available to all State agencies, councils and the private sector using adopted procedures for storage, accessing and sharing data. PIA NSW considers that the repository should be held by the State Government as the resources to bring this to fruition would be beyond any individual council.

Local Strategic Planning Guides

PIA NSW considers that the form and structure (but not necessarily content) of local studies (economic, housing, recreation, community needs, employment, etc) needs to be consistent so that data collection methods are comparable, methodologies are robust and assumptions are explicit. The data should be amenable to access and analysis using new information technology. PIA NSW supports the development of Strategic Planning Resource Guides for various local planning studies prepared by practitioners in the respective fields to set base standards, study methodologies, standard procedures, core criteria/assumptions and data functions for research work.

The Institute can assist with the collation of best practice Australian and International examples of local planning studies for the Strategic Planning Resource Guide templates. The proposed Guide templates should be pilot tested before they are released to assess their effectiveness and value.

Local Strategic Planning

All councils should undertake local strategic planning based on the Resource Guides and use relevant information to underpin, firstly, the holistic Community Strategic Plans (Local Government Act) and secondly, to inform and incorporate in the statutory Local Environmental Plans or Development Control Plans. An outline of the ‘Local Strategic Plan Process’ is provided below:

Figure 2: Local Strategic Plan Process
The studies obtained from local strategic planning should be made available to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, to other government agencies and to local communities to understand the basis of local planning and decision making.

**Local Planning in Context**

Federal Government initiatives such as the COAG Reform Council criteria for Capital Cities (refer to http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/agenda/cities) and the State Government’s work on the State Plan, Regional Plans and Sub Regional Plans influence local planning. Local planning research must have regard to those documents.

If there are inconsistencies between the local planning outcomes and higher level plans then they must be resolved through evidence based negotiation. This is a normal and expected process in a mature and collaborative planning system.

**Principles**

PIA NSW considers that the following principles should serve as a guide for the preparation of Local Strategic Plans:

a) Must be evidence based;

b) Must take into consideration the views of all stakeholders and those likely to be affected;

c) Must identify the criteria for making decisions that involve choosing between different strategy outcomes and reconciling the choices;

d) Must take into account higher order policies or strategies such as International, Federal or State planning policies;

e) Must acknowledge that circumstances may change and strategies need to adapt over time;

f) Must be explicit about responsibilities and accountability for implementation;

g) Must be holistic rather than focused on one issue;

h) Must identify how the strategy will be delivered, funded and monitored;

i) Must address sustainability, equity and feasibility;

j) Must be considered by the State Government and any relevant agencies when planning proposals are assessed, and must apply for access to State Government funding and to ensure consistency with State and Regional Plans; and

k) Must be integrated with other relevant Plans/Policies including the Council Community Strategic Plan and be incorporated as appropriate into the Local Environment Plan.

PIA NSW supports working with other professional associations, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the Local Government and Shires Association to implement this Policy Statement.
Actions

1. PIA NSW will confer with the NSW Premier’s Department to seek agreement on the establishment and maintenance of an electronic repository of State agency and Council research papers, studies and reports that are applicable to strategic planning in NSW.

2. PIA NSW will seek input from its members and affiliated associations to compile a preliminary database of “best practice” local strategic planning studies or projects. PIA NSW will seek financial assistance from the State Government and Local Government and Shires Association to undertake a review of the documents to assemble a set of standard study methodologies and procedures.

3. PIA NSW will promote the use by all councils of Local Strategic Planning Guides for consistent and evidence based planning research.

4. PIA NSW will continue to advocate for the inclusion in the NSW planning legislation of provisions requiring that local strategic planning be a pre-requisite to the adoption of all Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans.
ATTACHMENT 1

Local Strategic Planning Studies which may be undertaken using Standardised Guides

1.0 Local Area

- Vision statement
- Local area profile and localities
- 10-year projections (population, housing, economic development with data sources identified)

1.1 Urban Development and Physical Planning

- Local precincts or master plans for sites or areas
- Residential strategy
- Land Use Plan (urban, rural, environmental, conservation, special purposes)
- Growth Settlement Plan (land release, rural subdivisions)
- Land Acquisition Plan
- Land capability assessment and mapping

1.2 Environment, Heritage and Resources

- Stormwater Management Plans
- Environmental Management Plans (flooding, bushfire, acid sulphates, threatened species, bush land)
- State of Environment Report
- Environmental Sustainability Plan and projects
- Waste strategy
- Water catchment and waterways management
- Natural Resources Plan
- Hazard mapping
- Heritage Conservation and Heritage Items Plan
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies

1.3 Parks, Public Places and Culture

- Social Plan
- Community Facilities Plan
- Arts Development Policy
- Library Services Plan
- Cultural Development Policy
- Parks Plans of Management
- Recreation Plans
- Public Domain Improvement Plans

1.4 Economy and Employment

- Employment Growth Plan
- Centres Development Plan
- Economic Development Plan
- Property Asset Management
- Agricultural Land Use Plan
1.5 Infrastructure, Transport and Access

- Traffic and Transport Management Plan
- Access and Mobility Plan
- Urban Infrastructure Improvement Programs
  - Roads
  - Drainage
  - Services

1.6 Governance and Implementation

- Decision making (IHAP, JRPP, PAC, officer delegations)
- Communication and community engagement process
- Input to Community Strategic Plan
- Link to Delivery Program (10 years)
- Link to Operational Plan (12 month program)
- Evaluating progress
- Monitoring and review (5 years)
- Local development controls
- Local Emergency Management Plans
ATTACHMENT 2

Eight Principles for Integrated Strategic Planning as a basis for Development Planning and Development Assessment*

- **Identify the spatial area**
  The area can be local or regional

- **Develop a holistic long term vision**
  This may be from 5 to 20 years

- **Integrate economic, environmental, social, cultural and equity factors**
  These factors are inextricably linked

- **Undertake social and environmental research and analysis**
  Information, analysis and understanding are crucial to sound policy development

- **Respect the capacity of the environment for present and future generations**
  Irreversible damage to the environment is to be avoided

- **Involve the community throughout the process and recognise its diversity**
  Any plan must be responsive to community views and values if it is to have any chance of success

- **Apply the principle of subsidiarity**
  The principle of subsidiarity demands that higher levels of government should not undertake what a lower level of government can do for itself

- **Identify suitable benchmarks and performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation**
  Effective monitoring and subsequent review ensures the strategic planning process is flexible, dynamic and relevant

*Development Assessment Forum *Good Strategic Planning Guide* (2001)