In the lead up to the NSW Election, the NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia is calling for action on a number of key elements, including restoring community confidence in the planning system, providing leadership in the planning system and being positive and proactive about setting the planning framework for NSW.

The NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia will continue to engage the major political parties on these issues. The Institute is an apolitical organisation but it is essential that we make a stand on planning issues for the sake of the NSW community, the planning profession and our members.

PIA NSW advocates that planning for NSW cities and regions requires well managed growth that creates housing diversity, employment together with balanced environmental and social community outcomes.

Sydney should be globally recognised for its competitiveness, innovation, sustainability and liveability.

To be effective in managing the growth, PIA believes that the Government needs to lead the rebuilding of the community’s and the development industry’s trust in the planning profession to provide certainty and clarity to the planning process.

PIA NSW sets three key challenges for the NSW Government for the next four years:

» Restoring community confidence in the planning profession
» Providing planning leadership and
» Creating a proactive planning regime.
If met, these key elements will restore the balance between “my” local environment, the community and growing the NSW economy.

A new Act

PIA has consistently called for a new Planning Act to rectify the fundamental flaws with the current antiquated, inefficient and ineffective Act. Whilst there were some controversial aspects of the Planning Bill that went to Parliament in 2013, much of it was broadly supported by most stakeholders including PIA.

Action: To restore confidence in planning in NSW, PIA calls for a new Planning Act to be enacted as soon as possible. The NSW planning system will be underpinned by up front strategic evidence based planning.

Governance Review

Confidence has been lost in the planning system in part due to a lack of internal and external clarity in who is responsible for planning and implementation of plans in NSW. There is a myriad of Departments, Councils, Agencies, Boards, Committees, Panels and others with overlapping roles and responsibilities. The end result is that even the agencies themselves are not always clear on where their roles start and end and consequently planning decisions are often slow, uncoordinated, inefficient, or just not made.

Action: To restore confidence and leadership in planning in NSW, PIA calls for a complete review and rationalisation of all bodies with a role in planning and delivery of plans within the state, which identifies clear and distinct roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for each body. PIA submits that planning is vital to the prosperity of NSW and the Planning Department should be a key, central agency within government.
Regional and sub regional planning

Regional and Sub regional planning provides strategies to deliver housing, employment, social and physical infrastructure whilst recognising the uniqueness of local neighbourhoods. These plans should set the scene by providing the narrative to Government priorities. The plans provide confidence to communities and the development industry as to how a place will change over time.

Action: PIA calls on the NSW Government to commit adequate resources to the regional planning process for the Sydney Metropolitan area and regional areas.

Community engagement

PIA notes the cynicism within parts of the community about planning and development decision making. In order to restore confidence in the system PIA calls for effective community participation with the associated attention to detail and resourcing to achieve this.

Community engagement should not be a one-off event: it should be an ongoing process throughout the strategic planning process to allow for feedback and ongoing communication. This helps to demonstrate to a community that participation is not simply an obligation the planning authorities have to fulfil.

It provides the basis for community acceptance and a better understanding of the value of planning.

Action: Implement the community engagement principles established in the 2013 White Paper on Planning Reform.

Integrating land use and infrastructure planning

PIA NSW advocates a bold vision for smart growth in NSW and Sydney. This vision can only be delivered through proactive integrated land use and infrastructure planning, identifying clear priorities based on demonstrated need.

Planning has a vital role to play navigating complex economic, environmental and social choices with the community, to support productivity growth in the NSW economy.

Genuine and consistent forward funding commitments are required to restore community confidence that the right infrastructure will be delivered in the right place at the right time.

Action: This requires planning leadership from the NSW Government based on a renewed commitment to deliver on infrastructure planning and delivery reforms identified in the White Paper. The reform needs to include a revised policy of both state and local funding contributions.

Housing diversity

A productive and attractive Global City needs a diversity of housing to function effectively and to compete internationally. By current standards however, Australia is second amongst developed nations with respect to the ratio of house prices to income when figures are compared to historical averages.

Action: PIA seeks a commitment from the State Government to develop a robust policy and implementation plan that enables a range of mechanisms to be utilised by Government (including local government) and the private sector to increase housing diversity and affordability across NSW.
Environment and biodiversity

NSW PIA advocates for a strong economy balanced with social and environmental outcomes.

The current biodiversity framework and legislation is complex and difficult to navigate. Different definitions and calculations of vegetation and species credits occur, and many assessments do not recognize the associated social and economic benefits in projects.

NSW PIA believes a review and integration between the methodology, definitions, calculations of credits and approach of bio banking, biocertification, Major Projects biodiversity framework and Part 5 of the EP & A Act is required to streamline and provide certainty to the public and private sector.

**Action:** Planners want to achieve good environmental outcomes, and welcome the opportunity to work with NSW government as part of the planning reforms to integrate and simplify environmental legislation.

Establish the economic value of planning

The effective and proactive planning of our cities results in economic productivity gains. The economic value of good planning should not be overlooked in decision making. Understanding the economic value of planning should also demonstrate why planning in the state is fundamentally important and must be adequately resourced.

**Action:** PIA seeks a commitment that a robust evidence base study will be prepared by the NSW State Government that quantifies the economic value of urban and regional planning to our cities and regions so as to inform balanced decision making that also protects the interests of future generations.

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