1 March 2018

To the Young Planners and Planners and Architects of CAP, RTPI, CAA and RIBA,

RE: How can young people within the Commonwealth help to deliver Sustainable Development Goal 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable?

It is with great pleasure that we, the National Young Planners Network of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), submit our contribution to your discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 11.

The Young Planners Network is a fierce advocate for the role of young people in the built environment. We believe positive disruption, innovation and change, can be brought about by creating supportive spaces that legitimise many voices, and enable young people’s voices to hold equal weight. In the context of great uncertainty, we must give young people a chance to take ownership over their futures.

Our Network works tirelessly over the year across the six States and two Territories to deliver programs, professional development opportunities and events that will build the capacity of young professionals to become leaders in their profession. We contribute to policy reform, public commentary about the built environment profession, and create spaces for young people to contribute their ideas to this crucial discussion. In response to your call for submissions, the Young Planners Network, driven by the National Young Planners Convenors Committee, has prepared a statement for your consideration.

We look forward to tuning in to the international webinar in March, and will be sure to promote this to our broader networks. We look forward to any future opportunities to collaborate with CAP, and can’t wait to bring the manifesto into the PIA Young Planners Network practice.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions regarding the attached.

Kindest regards,

Phoebe Harrison
PIA National Young Planner Director,

On behalf of the Young Planners Network
PIA Young Planners Network

Contribution to the Young Planners and Architects’ Discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 11

Prepared for CHOGM London, March 2018

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With input from the National Young Planner Convenors Committee.
Introduction

On behalf of the National Young Planners Network of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), we thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the manifesto at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London this year. We agree that young people have a crucial role to play in setting the agenda for urbanism and sustainable development in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11.

The National Young Planners Network supports the preparation of a manifesto that will clearly demonstrate the importance of young voices in planning and design. We support a document that will contribute to a progressive and active global new urban agenda, with clear and implementable goals that create a basis for immediate effect.

We firmly believe that young planners have a legitimate, indispensable role and a right to have their voices heard in the development of their cities and human settlements that are sustainable, resilient, safe and inclusive – in line with SDG11. Not only are they actors, but inheritors, of the places, spaces and experiences we create today.

Background

The opportunities and challenges facing cities and human settlements are infinitely complex. We plan today in a context of booming urbanisation, changing migration and increased displacement, climate change and a crisis of equal distribution. Among Commonwealth countries, as with the world, the gap between top earners and polluters, and those who face daily challenges to access basic goods and services, is growing. Meanwhile, despite an ever-sharpening understanding on the role of cities and how they shape communities and the environment, we struggle to affect meaningful change.

We believe that cities must embrace adaptive and innovative measures to address growing threats to environmental and social sustainability, whose effects will be most profound on the lives of urban inhabitants, and those living in places most likely to be affected by climate change impacts.

In Australia, an arid, highly urbanised country, water and food security, as well as impacts from sea level rise, are crucial considerations. We, like much of the world, face housing shortages and homelessness, along with relative vulnerability placed on people based on where they can afford to live. There is incredible disadvantage within our Aboriginal population, and at the same time more people than ever are choosing to move to Australia.

Young people can play a key role in facilitating knowledge transfer and opening public policy to create a foundation for positive urban futures on which emerge the types of cities and urban settlements Goal 11 envisages.

The PIA Young Planners Network has prepared its submission acknowledging many experiences will be Australia-centric, but that our submission may help contribute to the rich tapestry of information you receive, to be woven into the manifesto. Our submission will discuss:

- The voices of young people;
- The role of the city in the context of climate change;
- Social inequality in the city;
- The state of Australian cities; and
- Conclusion – to the manifesto!
The voices of young people

Due to their strategic approach to problem solving, young planners and built environment professionals are incredibly well-placed to present hope, new insights, and illuminate ways forward. They are active, are engaged, and are up to the challenges before them in the current urban age.

The 2016 Global Youth Development Index Report showing that the world’s youth population (15 to 29) is at an all-time high, of 1.8 billion people (more than 60% of the total population of the Commonwealth family of nations). This alone is a statistic that supports their inclusion, if not significant contribution to leadership, in decision-making.

Despite the above, the report highlights that our potential to contribute to a sustainable and prosperous future could be obstructed by increasing joblessness, unequal access to health and education and lack of political influence. These issues are particularly prevalent throughout the Commonwealth.

Young planners are also young people. So, what role do we play in responding to SDG 11?

As young planners who live, work and play in towns, cities and regions, we see the problems and successes of the places in which we live first-hand; but we also engage with many populations whose triumphs and challenges are new to us. As young planners, we are both privileged with positions that are inquisitive and require deep analysis. This gives us the professional knowledge and power to shape cities and the places which we and others inhabit – and we must treat this power with caution and respect. We, through the very nature of our profession, can be among the 60% of youths who can actively engage in the work of creating a better urban world.

Given the above, we understand that key issues facing young people and urbanisation today are climate change and social inequality, compounded by the urban condition.

Young planners have never been more globally engaged, better educated and more connected. Our profession grows in prominence, and is considered a worthy and interesting career choice. Our profession is also a powerful one: we are responsible for immensely important decisions, made daily, from small local projects that create opportunities in the neighbourhood, to city-shaping infrastructure. We must share our knowledge and experiences to build the capacity of our peers, and support a more equitable and sustainable world.

Climate change and the city

Climate change has the potential to be the greatest disruptor to our way of life than we can imagine. Our profession is on the frontline to help cities adapt and mitigate to the consequences of increased extreme weather events and the effects of climate change. Around the world, many cities, regions and countries in the Commonwealth are already dealing with environmental consequences, such as rising sea levels, extreme heat, destruction of natural habitats, and extinction of species due to climate change and urban expansion. It is the countries and communities with the least resources are the ones that are most impacted.

Importantly, there is great opportunity to find wealth within the Commonwealth to address these risks.

Despite the above, too few nation states, actors in the corporate and non-government sectors, are taking reasonable steps to address climate change and its effects. Collective responsibility and appropriate governance models will be fundamental to addressing this wicked problem. The consequences of inaction will be felt across the Commonwealth. We call on the Commonwealth Secretariat to do more to seriously address climate change. A multifaceted approach forcing a

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cross sector and industry approach must be undertaken. **The youth manifesto on SDG 11 must advocate for strengthened global agreements that will significantly reduce emission levels and change consumer, business and societal behaviour.**

What can young planners do?

Our profession has a unique role to play in combating climate and improving sustainability within urban environments. Urban Planners have a special role in shaping the form and function of how cities and their citizens interact within the urban morphology. Urban planners can foster sustainable building form and transport use. However, urban planners have also facilitated the formulation of low density, car-dependent cities, reliant on fossil fuels – Australian cities can attest. Cities, and their citizens, are among the biggest contributors to carbon emissions and more cities need to take responsibility in combating climate change.

Already, the C40 Cities climate change program shows that there is a commitment from some of the world’s leading cities to combat climate change and enhance sustainability measures. While progress has been made, there is still a long way to go. **The following steps should be taken within our profession to act against climate change and its effects:**

- Advocate for a ‘one world’ approach to planning decision- and policy-making that appreciates the precious and finite world;
- Create respectful spaces and meaningful ways for the community (and crucially, the youth population) to contribute to visioning our better futures;
- Review and assess urban planning and the built environment professions’ role in the urban ecosystem;
- Review and assess urban policy orthodoxy to consider ways in which environmentally sustainable design techniques can be meaningfully and widely adopted;
- Adopt stronger regulations that lead the way for adaptive measures to mitigate growing threats to environmental and social sustainability;
- Make significant investment in public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, acknowledging that driverless cars and new technology will not be the solution to emissions problems;
- Employ proven funding models such as value capture, infrastructure bonds and transport-integrated developments to deliver investments; and
- Demand higher return for public investment in private projects delivered through public-private-partnerships.

Young planners and built environment professionals must be at the forefront of these conversations, and refuse to accept decisions that are ‘less-than’.

Finally, young planners must do more to ensure areas and regions of high ecological value are protected and enhanced. Across the developed and developing world, open space and natural habitats are under both physical threat from urban and industrial expansion, as well as lifecycle threat due to human-induced climate change. We are living through one of the most rapid phases of extinction in human history, and must do more to protect the environment.

**Social inequality and the city**

Urban inequality is shaped by both spatial and social forces, and the two are closely intertwined. Sustainable and resilient urban places exhibit high levels of social-connectedness, mobility, relative wealth, access to health, and education. Design and delivery of the built environment

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2 It should not be forgotten that in Western discourse, the contemporary urban planning movement arose from Sir Ebenezer Howard OBE, the founder of the Garden City Movement. Howard established the ‘utopian’ nature-based form of urbanism as a direct response to the ills of the industrial city. We believe that a similar, radical reinterpreting of the urban form is required.
have significant roles to play in mitigating social inequalities, fostering inclusion and creating safe environments for everyone.

Recent research conducted in Australia found that, while cities provide many social and cultural opportunities and allow large numbers of people to stay connected, there is a negative relationship between the size of a city and income and wealth generation.\(^3\) The agglomeration and spill-over effects of clustering related businesses, particularly finance and business service and “knowledge workers”, is well recognised as contributing to the financial success of cities. However, these beneficial effects are highly concentrated and do not manifest as growth to the wealth of citizens spread equally across the population. **We must engage with ways to ensure that as cities get richer, citizens benefit equally from the growth.**

Today, high levels of debt, much higher housing and living costs and increasingly difficultly to access a very competitive jobs market have particularly impacted the ability of younger generations to take a greater economic, political and social role in civil society as they increasingly lack the time and resources to do so. Here, **there is a key role for young people in the built environment professions to engage with alternative housing models that provide flexibility and opportunity, rather than unmanageable debt and sprawling, dormitory suburbs.**

Younger generations are more adaptable and entrepreneurial, and open to change and new ideas. These characteristics provide us with the skills and motivation to bring about necessary change. They are incredibly able and capable of being able to work on reimagining the ways in which our cities are run, designed, and inhabited to overcome the abovementioned inequalities. **There is a need to reimagine the city as a space of social equality. Young planners must be open to new ideas, be inclusive, and advocate for policies that reduce the social and economic exclusion and segregation of the past and present. The manifesto must call for built environment professions to have such capabilities if SDG 11 is to be achieved.**

**There are many ways to plan for a more socially inclusive city. We advocate for:**

- People-first decision-making;
- Universal design principles;
- Safe cities for all;
- Variety in housing typologies to ensure communities are not stratified;
- Flexibility in housing typologies so places can grow and change with their inhabitants;
- A focus on the ‘local’ and better connectivity between neighbourhoods, coupled with recast dormitory suburbs and a move away from costly urban sprawl; and
- Good access to transport, jobs and high quality, flexible open spaces and public places that encourage encounter and act as social ‘bumping’ points.

Cities need to put people first, but people also need to put the city first. By putting people first, systems of governance and decision-making will deliver projects, both small and large, that serve the best interests of the city’s inhabitants. If people can actively put their city first, from the neighbourhood, to suburb and metropolitan levels, decision-makers will have the tools and support necessary to deliver ongoing and positive urban change. Collective goal-setting and communicative planning can create a policy environment that will contribute to improved social cohesiveness and lead to a more resilient and inclusive social city.

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The state of Australian cities

Australia is fortunate to have some of the world’s most liveable cities. Its cities prosper by having the ‘great outdoors’ on our doorstep, clean air, low population density and spaciousness, as well as a mixture of heritage precincts and modern conveniences.

This is a truly urban nation, with over 85% of the population living in major cities, most of which are concentrated along the east coast. According to the 2016 Census, the ‘typical’ Australian is likely to be married, have a mortgage in a suburban area and two children, than might be believed by classic narratives about rural lifestyles, rounding up cattle on an outback station or surfing along our stunning coastline.4

At present, Australia is moving away from a mining, towards an infrastructure, boom with new schools and hospitals being built. There is a strong focus on employment and the creation of social hubs beyond our city centres. New urban rail projects underway in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth are being undertaken to remedy the social and economic inequalities discussed above. Australian governments have continued to roll out a model of suburban sprawl model to deliver new housing, while ad hoc infill occurs in established areas. As a result, Melbourne and Sydney have some of the largest physical footprints in the world for populations of their size. Investment in public transport has not kept pace, and car dependence to access work in the inner-city continues despite many efforts to reverse the trend.

Australian cities are therefore at once successful, but at the same time are struggling to meet community and industry expectations for social, economic and environmental sustainability, and therefore urban equality too. The key challenge for young planners therefore will be to find ways to facilitate affordable, sustainable and accessible housing for Australia’s many urbanites. Part of this also will be advocating for integrated transport to keep people moving between work, home, family, friends and recreation.

Conclusion

Australian cities have much to learn from other cities around the world, but also our cities can offer insights in return. As such, we look forward to reading the young planners’ and architects’ manifesto to address SDG 11 in March. The PIA National Young Planners Network puts forward the following key priorities for your discussion.

Young people will contribute to achievement of SDG 11 and must be given the space to contribute and power to:

- Share knowledge and experience from around the Commonwealth
- Build one another’s capacity to address economic, social and environmental challenges that limit resilience in cities and human settlements;
- Capitalise on the diversity of the Commonwealth nations to ensure diversity delivers better futures
- Advocate for ‘one-world’ planning and policy-making that rejects the status quo;
- Identify a nexus between economically prosperous cities and the distribution of value uplift among a city’s residents;
- Support one another to become strong, fearless and flexible leaders that facilitate good governance and commit to constructive goals; and
- Share knowledge among the Commonwealth and close the spatial divide to the benefit of all nations.

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