Growth Management

How is NSW performing in developing and approving growth management plans for regions that integrate social, economic, environmental and transport issues?

Managing sustainable growth in NSW is a key challenge facing planners in the light of population pressures, demographic change and the migration of people to the coast. The State Government's response to this challenge has been to prepare a 25-year Metropolitan Strategy for greater Sydney and regional strategies for high growth areas, principally on the coast. These strategies are being used by State and local planners to manage land-use planning, natural resource management and infrastructure issues.

The Metropolitan Strategy was released in December 2005 providing a long-term plan to manage growth over the next 25 years. It comprises seven component strategies that address economy and employment, centres and corridors, housing, transport, environment and resources, parks and public places, and governance. Each of these strategies concludes with a detailed set of objectives and actions. An update report on the implementation of the Strategy can be downloaded from the Department of Planning website - http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/corporate_publications/pdf/metrostrategy_update2007.pdf

Regional Strategies have been finalised for the Far North Coast, the Lower Hunter, the Illawarra and the South Coast Regions, while draft Regional Strategies have been exhibited for the Mid North and Central Coasts, and substantial progress has been made on a draft Regional Strategy for the Sydney Canberra Corridor region.

Each Regional Strategy provides a spatially-based plan to manage the expected environmental, economic and population challenges that will be faced by the region over the next 25 years. Supporting the plan are projections on population growth, housing and employment requirements, as well as strategies and actions to meet these demands in a sustainable manner. Regional Strategies will be implemented primarily by councils through local environmental plans, but they will also inform State agency planning and infrastructure provision through the State Infrastructure Strategy.

Final and draft Regional Strategies can be downloaded at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au.plansforaction/index.asp

In February 2006, Premier Morris Iemma announced a plan to build a network of six key regional cities to underpin the State’s economic growth and create more local jobs. NSW has now delivered final City Centre Plans for Wollongong and draft plans for Newcastle, Gosford, Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith. The City Centre Plans include a Vision for the future, a Local Environmental Plan, a Development Control Plan and a Civic Improvement Plan.

These four plans for each City will help to achieve key priorities outlined under the State Plan including more local jobs, healthy communities and a supply of land and mix of housing that meets demand.

The City Centre Plans have resulted in 6 million square metres of new development potential and an increase in land value of $3 billion. Each of the six cities is well positioned to play a greater role in the commercial, intellectual and cultural leadership of NSW, as part of a network of cities, for the next 25 years. The Plans provide a catalyst for future growth, while strengthening each city's unique characteristics. The taskforce model used to development
the City Centre Plans is an example of a faster, smarter approach to planning, that drives economic change.

**Sustainability Indicators**

*How is NSW performing in developing sustainability indicators that can be used to measure the performance of plans?*

The Metropolitan Strategy includes a number of sustainability based performance standards to measure progress across the five aims of livability, economic competitiveness, fairness, environmental protection and governance that together help to make Sydney a more sustainable city.

The subregional strategies set dwelling and employment capacity targets at the subregional and local government levels. These targets are to be met in local environmental plans over the next 25 years. Achievement of these targets provide key sustainability gains in terms of locating growth close to services and public transport, growing local employment opportunities and reducing the demand for travel.

The implementation is at the early stage but many achievements have already been made.

The Metro CEOs Group oversees and monitors the implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy and addresses key policy and agency interaction matters. An update on the implementation of the 231 Strategy actions is provided to the Infrastructure and Planning Committee of Cabinet on a half yearly basis.

The Metropolitan Strategy Update Report was released in June 2007 and outlines work undertaken since the release of the Strategy.

Under the NSW State Plan a series of targets have been established following extensive community involvement and input that guide and direct the focus of the Government's efforts in the implementation of long term planning strategies. These targets cover issues such as housing affordability, location of urban development close to employment opportunities, increasing economic investment across the State as well as in rural areas and environmental targets. Each CEO is responsible and will be measured against the achievement of the targets in the strategies.

In addition to the measurement against targets in the State Plan the Department of Planning regularly monitors and reports against the implementation of its long term strategies.

The Metropolitan Strategy includes a significant number of sustainability-based performance standards, including the following:

- The number of jobs located within 30 minutes by public transport is to increase to 80% over the 25 year life of the Metropolitan Strategy.
- Dwelling and employment capacity targets set at subregional and Local Government levels to be met in local environmental plans over the next 25 years. Achievement of these targets provide key sustainability gains in terms of locating growth close to services and public transport, growing local employment opportunities and reducing the demand for travel.

Regional Strategies set out sustainability criteria and a direction made by the Minister under section 117 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (Direction 5.1) requires Local Environmental Plans to be consistent with regional strategies. The criteria cover infrastructure provision, access, housing, diversity, employment lands, avoidance of risk, natural resources, environmental protection and quality and equity in services and a measurable explanation of the criteria is provided to enable transparent assessment of proposals against criteria.
Similarly, the regional strategies identify population, dwelling and job projections that will be monitored yearly to determine the success of the strategies and their implementation by local councils.

NSW applies mandatory performance standards to the construction of housing, including all styles of houses and apartments. The NSW Government introduced the Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) in July 2004 with the aim of reducing water usage and greenhouse gas emissions. BASIX continues to be the leading domestic residential sustainability measure in Australia and has kept this lead position due to a number of key amendments and improvements to the scheme:

- 1 July 2006 – the BASIX target was increased to 40% of greenhouse emissions.
- 1 October 2006 – BASIX applies to all residential alterations and additions throughout NSW.
- 30 May 2007 – Government announced funding for two demonstration co-generation projects for residential multi-units at Chatswood and Rouse Hill.
- 29 June 2007 – threshold for residential alterations and additions lowered from $100,000 to $50,000.

Each of the Development Control Plans for the Six Regional Cities includes objectives and controls for energy efficiency and conservation and water conservation.

www.basix.nsw.gov.au

**Governance**

*How is NSW performing in having governance structures in place that can support the development and implementation of effective growth management plans?*

**The State Plan**

- Under the NSW State Plan a series of targets have been established following extensive community involvement and input that guide and direct the focus of the Government's efforts in the implementation of long term planning strategies. Each CEO is responsible and will be measured against the achievement of the targets in the strategies.
- The Department of Planning has significant responsibility for two of the State Plan’s priorities: E5: Jobs Closer to Home, and E6: Housing Affordability.
- Under the State Plan a number of new governance structures, including a Standing Committee of Cabinet, a coordinating Office in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and a CEOs’ group. Lead agencies must prepare Priority Delivery Plans and must report on progress to the Cabinet Committee.

**Metropolitan Strategy and Land Releases**

- The Metro Strategy includes a number of innovative governance mechanisms, including the following:
  1. The Growth Centres Commission, a statutory authority responsible for the orderly rezoning and release of land within the Northwest and Southwest Growth Centres that will provide the bulk of Sydney’s greenfield land for the life of the Metro Strategy.
  2. The implementation of the Strategy is overseen by the Infrastructure and Planning Committee of Cabinet to which the Minister for Planning submits quarterly reports.
  3. The Metropolitan CEOs’ Group also oversees the whole-of-Government implementation of the Strategy’s 231 recommendations.
Infrastructure

*How is NSW performing in having a timetable and funding commitment for major social and physical infrastructure in accordance with a growth management plan?*

The State Government has recently streamlined the governance and coordination processes for forecasting, planning, prioritising and funding infrastructure. These mechanisms include the Infrastructure and Planning Committee of Cabinet, the Office of the Coordinator General and the Office of Infrastructure Management within the Treasury.

The State Infrastructure Strategy, released in May 2006, contributes to the achievement of the Metropolitan Strategy outcomes by setting out State investment commitments for infrastructure beyond the budget cycle.

Both the Metropolitan Strategy and Regional Strategies provide long-term (25 year) planning directions to inform the State Infrastructure Strategy and agencies and councils’ future infrastructure investment decisions.

The State Infrastructure Strategy can be downloaded from:

Transport

*How is NSW performing in having a commitment to fund improvement and expansion of public transport integrated with a growth management plan?*

Transport is a critical element of the Metropolitan Strategy which provides a broad framework for the sustainable growth and development of Sydney over the next 25 years. The Transport Strategy component of the Metropolitan Strategy includes eight key objectives and 18 specific initiatives and 38 individual actions. Responsibility for all of these actions has been assigned to specific State agencies and all parties are responsible for regular reporting on their delivery through the Metro Strategy’s governance process (see under “Governance” above).

On 20 November 2006, the NSW Premier released the Government’s Urban Transport Statement - a $660 million package of new and accelerated initiatives to address Sydney’s present and future transport needs. The Statement is an action plan that responds to the growing transport challenges in Sydney as our population of 4.1 million is forecast to grow to more than 5 million within 20 years.

The Integrated Land Use and Transport (ILUT) package (DUAP 2001) provides a framework for State government agencies, councils and developers to integrate land use and transport planning at the regional and local levels. The policy package consists of five documents:
- **Overview of ILUT** – also includes an explanatory note on accessibility criteria for including urban land in the Urban Development Program.
- **Right Place for Business and Services Planning Policy.**
- **Improving Transport Choice** – practice guidelines on how to implement the policy.
- **Draft State Environmental Planning Policy - Integration of Land Use and Transport.**
- **Summary of Employment and Journey to Work Patterns in the Greater Metropolitan Region** – key statistics that will help land use and transport policy development.

Demographic Change

*How is NSW performing in developing a sea change/tree change strategy to address the impacts of population shifts?*
Demographic changes, including the sea/tree change phenomenon are addressed in coastal Regional Strategies. (See also above under “Growth Management”). Regional strategies have been prepared for the entire coast of NSW and substantial progress is being made on regional strategies in high growth inland areas as well such the Sydney Canberra Corridor and the Murray Valley.

The NSW Government has also provided significant funding to local councils to undertake local strategic planning to support the preparation of new local environmental plans and to enable the sustainable management of growth potential. These council strategies are important in allowing councils to prepare a strategic response to the pressures of new growth, including the identification of environmentally sensitive areas, as well as the identification of new residential and employment lands.

Finally, a review of rural planning in the Central West of NSW has recommended that a more strategic approach be taken to the identification of new rural residential and rural lifestyle opportunities. A more strategic approach provides sufficient capacity to accommodate those seeking a tree change, all the while ensuring that land-use conflict with agricultural activities are reduced.

Housing

How is NSW performing in developing a housing strategy that addresses affordability, housing choice and sustainable design?

Housing affordability is a priority matter under the NSW State Plan and a key objective of the Metropolitan Strategy. It is the Government’s aim that all people in New South Wales, including older people, people with disabilities and those on low incomes have access to affordable and well designed housing.

The Department of Housing is the lead government agency coordinating the development of a whole-of-government strategy for affordable housing, and is currently implementing two initial initiatives, New Directions in Social housing for Older People and the Inner West Strategy.

The NSW Local Government Housing Kit, commissioned by the Department of Housing in liaison with the Department of Planning provides guidance to local government in assessing their local needs in relation to affordable housing and formulating appropriate responses to those needs.

A review of the Seniors Living State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) is underway. An amended version of the SEPP has been on exhibition from 24 May to 26 June 2007. The SEPP is being finalised considering the submissions received.

Additional work on a strategy for affordable housing is in progress, lead by the Department of Housing and in cooperation with the Department of Planning and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Public Participation

How is NSW performing in having effective mechanisms for public participation in developing planning strategies?

Community consultation and public participation is an integral part of the NSW planning system which applies equally to strategic land use planning and major development assessment. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act provides as its recurrent
thread the importance of appropriate community participation and involvement in strategic, local and development assessment processes.

The Government is continuing with a broad-ranging planning reform agenda aimed at:

- Reforms that ensure the planning system remain responsive and relevant. The plans of the future will be more comprehensive and fewer in number.
- Effective and credible development assessment process which retains comprehensive community participation.
- More community involvement in the way that plans are developed, implemented and reviewed. Local communities will be able to determine their own futures within broad principles set out in regional plans.
- Better public access to information about planning. Our web site will play an important role in this.

The Department’s internet site provides the Department with the ability to enhance this process by hosting significant background proposal and project documentation which increases public awareness and participation.

The Department of Planning held a one-day forum ‘New Ideas for Planning’ at the Australian Technology Park in Sydney on Tuesday 14 August 2007. The forum provided an opportunity for people to hear about the latest NSW government reforms and help shape the next generation of planning systems and outcomes. This is an example of the continuing dialogue the Government wishes to see as an integral part of the planning system. Outcomes will be posted shortly on the Department of Planning website.

**Planning workforce**

*How is NSW performing in having a well-resourced and skilled professional workforce to provide expertise to the planning process?*

The NSW Government recognises that a well resourced and trained planning profession is vital for the State’s future growth, particularly in regional NSW. The Department of Planning recognises that there is a shortage of planners nationally and during 2006 the Department led a working group, the Planning Professionals’ Taskforce, to canvass ideas to address the issue. The work of the Taskforce culminated with the release of a report entitled ‘The NSW Planning Profession: Looking Forward’. The report identifies a range of measures to be implemented by the Department of Planning and other stakeholders to make planning more attractive as a career, improve training and development for professional planners and deal with pressures faced by planners in the workforce, including pressures faced by aspects of the planning system. Some of the recommended measures are:

- Implementing the Department of Local Government / Department of Planning scholarship program;
- Promoting short courses in statutory assessment to meet the immediate identified shortage of statutory planners;
- Implementing capacity building and staff development in workplaces;
- Implementing joint State/local government assessment teams;
- Continuing to implement planning reform to simplify the system and investigate further reforms to simplify the development assessment process;
- Consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to exempt and complying development amongst councils.

Streamlined Assessment

*How is NSW performing in having a streamlined planning assessment in place?*

**Major projects**

NSW instituted major reforms to the assessment and approval of major (regional or state-significant) projects with the introduction in 2005 of Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and the Major Projects State Environmental Planning Policy. This has created a more streamlined and better integrated process to deal with major infrastructure and development proposals. The new regime has cut unnecessary red tape, reduced assessment times, and has brought all State-agency input and associated permits under a single assessment and approval process. The new legislation reinforces long-term planning of major sites and provides greater predictability for development proponents by providing for the declaration of State Significant Sites and the approval of Concept Plans for major, staged development projects.

**Local Planning**

In July 2006, the Department introduced a system to collect information on local development approvals and the performance of the planning system.

The system is based on data collected from councils. It will have significant long-term benefits for State and local government, the development industry and the community. The information will be used to improve policy and practice advice and inform stakeholders on development activity in NSW. It is intended that this information together with other data collected through the department’s tracking of local environmental plans will provide a foundation for overall monitoring of the planning system.

Specifically, the system:

- monitors key aspects of the planning and development assessment system and identify areas where further streamlining of current procedures and practices could occur
- assists in early identification of emerging trends and provide a lead for ongoing system improvement and management
- assists in improving the public accountability of the system by establishing performance measures and benchmarks based on comparable data available
- monitors the performance of State agency referrals and integrated approvals
- monitors the performance of councils in planning and development matters.

The first *Local Development Performance Monitoring Report* was published in July 2007. The Department issued the performance monitoring data requirements for 2006-2007 determinations in July 2007. Council responses for 2006-2007 data are due 18 September. The Department has commenced work on a system to automatically export data from council systems.

**Urban Design**

*How is NSW performing in having clear policies that promote quality buildings and urban spaces?*

Good building design should positively contribute to the overall architectural quality of the city and provide buildings appropriate to their context. In some circumstances, this contribution may be as an iconic or landmark building, but more typically it is as a well-designed building that fits sensitively into the streetscape.

The Local Environmental Plans for the Six Regional Cities Project included design excellence provisions that require or provide the opportunity for a landowner to hold an ‘architectural design competition’ for the design of a building or larger site containing more
than one building. That process may lead to a design based ‘bonus’in building height and/or floor space ratio (FSR). Design Excellence Guidelines have been developed to provide guidelines for such competitions.

An architectural design competition has the potential to achieve design excellence and encourage innovation without delaying the development approval process. The purpose of an architectural design competition is to promote innovative design solutions that achieve high quality buildings and spaces. In recognition of the additional cost and effort required by a competitive process, a successful design competition that achieves design excellence can result in a development bonus in relation to building height and/or floor space.

Design competition objectives include:
- To achieve a diversity of architectural response;
- To achieve a high standard of architectural excellence;
- To encourage flexibility within the urban design controls to allow for newer or unexpected solutions;
- To provide incentive through greater FSR and/or height; and
- To encourage a sense of civic pride.

The Design Quality Program Residential Flats is an initiative of the Department of Planning to improve the design quality of flat developments of three storeys or more, and containing four or more dwellings.

The program was established to implement the key recommendations of Achieving Better Design – Residential Flat Development in NSW, the report of the Urban Design Advisory Committee in response to the Premier’s Forum on Residential Flat Design in March 2000. This forum brought together developers, government representatives, architects and other industry professionals to consider ways of improving the design quality of residential flat buildings.

The core element of the Design Quality Program is State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65. SEPP 65 aims to improve design quality of residential flat buildings of three or more storeys, and containing four or more self contained dwellings. The Policy recognises that the design quality of residential flat development is of significance for environmental planning for the State due to the economic, environmental, cultural and social benefits of high quality design.

SEPP 65 aims to improve the design quality of residential flat development in NSW, aiming to:
- ensure that it contributes to the sustainable development of NSW,
- achieve better built form and aesthetics of buildings and of the streetscapes and public spaces they define,
- better satisfy the increasing demand, changing social and demographic profile of the community and the needs of the widest range of people from childhood to old age, including those with disabilities,
- maximise amenity, safety and security for the benefit of occupants and the wider community,
- minimise the consumption of energy from non-renewable resources, to conserve the environment and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Climate Change**

*How is NSW performing in having a strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change?*
The development of a coherent strategy on dealing with climate change is the principal responsibility of the Department of Environment and Climate change. However, the Department of Planning recognises that the planning system can contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

From a planning perspective the principal tools for preparing for climate change and mitigating its impacts fall into two main areas, coastal planning and sustainable urban and building design.

Coastal Planning
Sea level rise and changed coastal processes associated with global climate change are predicted to increase coastal hazard risks to existing and proposed development in low lying coastal areas. The NSW Department of Planning has led a pilot project under the State Government’s Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Research Program, on the NSW Central and Hunter Coasts (commenced June 2006, to be completed September 2007) using air borne laser scanning technology (LiDAR) to obtain elevation data. Elevation provides a proxy for identifying and quantifying increased coastal hazard risks and identifying potential adaptation strategies to minimise them. It is anticipated that the results of this pilot project will encourage local government to consider the broad benefits of LiDAR data in relation to climate change adaptation planning. The results are being presented to coastal Catchment Management Committees and councils.

Urban and building design
The Metropolitan Strategy and the subregional strategies that are currently being developed have a strong emphasis on encouraging urban growth within existing urban areas, and focussing that growth around public transport and services. The objective is to create walkable, less car-dependent urban environments.

Details of the BASIX building standards system, which mandate substantial reductions in the greenhouse gas emissions of residential buildings, are given above under (“Sustainability Indicators”).