

ACT Government Submission
to the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on
Environment and Heritage Inquiry
into the Development of
Sustainable Cities

December 2003

1. INTRODUCTION

The House of Representative's inquiry into the sustainability of Australia's cities is a welcome interlude in the Commonwealth's recent disinterest in matters relating to the performance of Australia's urban centres (it is noted that the inquiry is timely given Australia's population is set to reach 20 million by the end of this year). The ACT Government is committed to the principles of sustainability across all of its activities. The most tangible evidence of the impact of development upon the environment, however, is urbanisation, and the Government is therefore pleased to make a contribution.

As with Australia's other centres of urban development, Canberra will be able to provide evidence of good and bad practice in relation to how settlement has impacted on the environment, but what is important is for us all to learn from each other. In this respect the inquiry complements the recent call by all State and Territory Planning Ministers for the Commonwealth to convene a National Summit on the future of Australia's cities and towns.

In the absence of support, the States and Territories are convening the Summit, however, Commonwealth participation will enhance the chances of this event identifying appropriate mechanisms for improving the responsiveness of urban development to the principles of sustainability.

2. CANBERRA - A SUSTAINABLE CITY

Sustainable cities should seek to exist within the tolerances of the surrounding ecosystem, not only in terms of what they extract, but also what they put back in the form of waste. But a sustainable city also needs to perform economically, providing employment opportunities and wealth creation for its communities. It must also provide for a dynamic and mutually supportive society that seeks to promote social inclusion and cultural diversity.

Cities, and activities associated with them, permanently modify the natural landscape. Historically, cities (including their rural predecessors) have occupied land with characteristics that lend themselves to supporting a range of activities and development (e.g. terrain, agricultural productivity, water supply and other natural resources, geographic location, etc). At the same time, and typically as an indirect result of the exploitation of these characteristics, the biological limits of the land will be exceeded and their continued viability may be put at risk with the extinction of species and ecological communities, and a decline in essential ecological services (including clean air and clean water). The larger the city, the greater the threat. In a world dominated by global markets, the consumption patterns of cities have changed dramatically so that their reach exceeds the catchment in which they exist physically. This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of the 'ecological footprint'.

The challenge that must be met in a sustainable city is to manage unsustainable patterns of consumption and waste production, retain remnant

environmental systems, urban habitat links and other natural features to the extent that in a biogeographical context the natural biodiversity and ecological processes are maintained over time. From an economic perspective, protection and conservation of natural assets and processes is significantly more attractive than repair, recovery or replacement. There are also associated health and other social benefits. Application of the 'precautionary principle'¹ is relevant as living things and their interaction with their environment are conditionally-renewable resources that lack substitutes and about which we know least.

In the ACT we can point to the following initiatives:

- A history of sound planning that has protected hills, ridges and buffers as a landscape component of the city, serving multiple purposes but facilitating protection of biodiversity (part of the Griffin legacy);
- Identification and protection of rural and mountain areas for landscape protection and water supply purposes (closed catchments) with consequent biodiversity conservation benefits that are also now recognised. 53% of the ACT is now reserved for conservation of the natural environment;
- Leasehold tenure that allows long term city planning needs to be protected;
- Recognition and protection of endangered ecological communities (natural temperate grassland and yellow box/red gum grassy woodland) and critical habitat for species that are threatened with extinction because of city development. These have been significant government decisions with substantial economic consequences (in terms of foregone development opportunities);
- A rural policy designed to secure conservation of ecological values in the city environs through regulatory and incentive mechanisms;
- Domestic housing energy rating standards for new buildings and additions (minimum four star consistent with Building Code of Australia). The ACT was the first State/Territory government to set a greenhouse gas reduction target in 1997 of reducing emissions back to 1990 levels by 2008. An ACT Greenhouse Strategy was released in 2000 to help achieve this goal. A particular focus has been improving the energy efficiency of housing through energy ratings standards for new houses and additions (minimum four stars consistent with the Building Code of Australia);
- Protection of built heritage and significant urban trees;
- Extensive open space being retained within the urban environment that, among other things and to varying degrees, enhances habitat connectivity and protects pre-existing biodiversity;

¹ Young, M.D. (1993) *For Our Children's Children: Some practical implications of inter-generational equity and the precautionary principle*. Resource Assessment Commission Occasional Publication No. 6 AGPS, Canberra.

- Continuing trends in urban design to reduce environmental impacts of city development;
- The ACT was the first government in the world to set a goal of achieving a waste-free society by 2010. Launched in 1996, the Waste Management Strategy for Canberra has been developed to set the vision and future directions for waste management in the Australian Capital Territory; since then it has achieved more than 65% diversion from landfill, the highest for any Australian city; and
- The development of a Water Resources Strategy, which is a comprehensive whole of government approach to the management of the ACT's water resources, which includes targets for potable and reused water. It will be used to secure reliable quality water for the ACT into the future through sustainable water use and management.

As a world leader in urban planning, it is recognised that the ACT can do more in relation to the planning of Canberra to minimise the adverse impacts of urban development, in particular:

- Greater synergies between transport and land use planning to help promote the use of alternative forms of transport and reduce trip generation;
- More efficient and time competitive public transport systems and safe bicycle access;
- A more compact urban structure that better utilises the land resource available, maximises the use of established infrastructure, protects environmental systems and agricultural land, and promotes a diversification of communities;
- A more accessible urban form that provides opportunities for greater levels of social inclusion and housing choice
- Improved demand management of scarce resources, specifically in relation to energy use, water consumption and waste recovery; and
- Increased use of renewable and less greenhouse intensive energy sources, brown and grey water recycling, and environmental design principles for domestic and commercial buildings.

3. PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE A.C.T.

The ACT Government has been very proactive in promoting sustainable development, but is highly conscious that more will need to be done. To this end it is in the process of developing the Canberra Plan, which will promote a concept of *People Places and Prosperity: a policy for sustainable development in the ACT*. This policy states that the concept of sustainability has three key components:

- Recognition of the interdependence of social, economic and environmental well-being;

- A focus on equity and fairness, and that we need to take into account the effect of our actions on others in an interdependent world; and
- Recognition that meeting the needs of today must not be at the expense of future generations being able to meet their own needs.

In order to implement the key components of the policy, the Government has also established an Office of Sustainability within the Chief Ministers Department, in order that the initiative can be promoted as whole of government.

The understanding of sustainability adopted by the ACT Government is one that recognises the need for a long-term perspective, the need for responsibilities and benefits to be shared equitably, and the interdependence of the economy, environment and society. In order to help achieve this, the Canberra plan will bring together three key strategies currently being prepared within Government, being an Economic White Paper, a Social Strategy and the Canberra Spatial Plan. The uniting of these three projects will help provide a holistic approach to advancing sustainable development and responds to the 2001 review of Canberra conducted by the OECD, which noted that a sustainable city was one that was able to:

- Maximise its competitiveness in a globalising economy;
- Strengthen social cohesion;
- Sustain quality, diversity and the character of place;
- Reconcile partnership and leadership;
- Achieve flexibility in decision-making;
- Create better city-regional linkages;
- Empower communities;
- Manage urban growth both at the centre and periphery of urban areas;
- Plan for its future with clear goals and priorities;
- Adopt an integrative strategy that reconciles economic, social and environmental objectives; and
- Promote rules and incentives that foster more sustainable practices.

There are other good examples that can be referred to, such as the Melbourne Principles on Sustainable Cities and the UN Habitat ten Characteristics of a Sustainable City.

In the ACT, the largest employer is the Commonwealth and the opportunity exists for its Canberra based agencies to demonstrate leadership and commitment in assisting the ACT achieve, or even exceed, its sustainability targets.

The Economic White Paper

The Economic White Paper (EWP) aims to provide a long-term economic development plan for Canberra and region extending out to the next 20-30 years. While economic growth and private sector development have been identified as key goals within the EWP, these are viewed against a backdrop

of preferred social outcomes, concern for the environment and the need to support economic development within best practice urban planning solutions.

The EWP also recognises that economic development and social and spatial planning issues are inexorably linked. Strong economic growth cannot be achieved without attention to social and community issues, nor can it be achieved without understanding demographic and workforce needs issues. In turn, population growth creates a need to better plan cities for more sustainable futures.

Canberra is also likely to be reliant on interstate migration to achieve certain workforce characteristics (in terms of both number and the skills required), it must work to maintain high standards in its physical and non-tangible assets so people want to live and work in Canberra. Again, there are social and spatial dimensions to this goal, as well as economic ones.

The Economic White Paper is also looking at the preferred mix of economic activity into the future. Canberra still, and perhaps always will, draw heavily on the public sector to underpin demand, growth and development. There are risks, however, in any dependent relationship so the EWP articulates a strategy to develop a larger and more diverse private sector.

At the margin, this involves encouraging certain forms of business activity over others. It may also see a diversion of effort into building critical mass for some of our emerging local industries such as ICT, space science, higher education, biotechnology and not least, tourism. One approach to achieve this is support for locational clustering and enterprise networking, which may also require planning interventions.

The Social Plan

The Canberra Social Plan is about valuing and investing in people and communities, and is part of the Government's planning process. The Canberra Social Plan will guide the Government in delivering services to the community, address strategic priorities and highlight opportunities for the social development of Canberra.

The Canberra Social Plan will contain priorities and actions for achieving the government's vision for the Canberra community. The social priorities are those areas of social policy that the ACT Government considers should be the focus of its activities over the next 10-15 years if Canberra is to achieve the community's vision, which states that; "...all people can reach their potential and share the benefits of our community." The draft social priorities are:

- Improve health and wellbeing
- Respect diversity and human rights
- Lead Australia in education and training
- Foster creativity and innovation
- Promote safe, strong, cohesive communities
- Respect and protect the environment
- And enhance economic opportunity

The Government acknowledges that to make a lasting difference in areas such as health, education, crime prevention, child protection and homelessness, government and non-government agencies must co-operate and co-ordinate their activities.

The ACT Government understands that it is essential for social planning to occur in step with planning for the physical development of the Territory and the way the economy should grow. Where we live, the way we work and the way we live are inextricably linked.

Research and feedback from consultations indicates that the key challenges for the future centre around health and quality of life, employment and economic security, safe and cohesive communities, education and training, creativity and innovation and a healthy attractive environment.

Spatial Plan

The development of a Spatial Plan will enable the Government to set a range of long-term objectives and principles that will seek to address how the development of the city, in the context of the region, can best meet the performance measures for economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Spatial Plan will provide a high order strategic planning direction to inform a range of more detailed planning documents that will facilitate appropriate development outcomes on the ground.

The Canberra Spatial Plan, while adopting sustainability as the underpinning principle for guiding the future development of the City, responds to a range of opportunities and threats that were not envisaged even 10 years ago, and were not imagined when the current plan for Canberra was developed in the late 1960s. These opportunities and threats are largely related to social and economic changes and increased environmental awareness. They include:

- Incremental and continuing change in household structure leading to smaller households with much more diverse characteristics;
- The impact of an aging community on sustainability of service provision;
- The cost of housing and housing choice;
- The costs of providing infrastructure and transport needs;
- The need to provide sustainable transport options for the future, while retaining ease of access within the city;
- The need to ensure the projected demand for land for residential land uses can be met;
- Opportunities for a more sustainable urban structure and form that responds to environmental issues, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy use and water consumption;
- The need to protect Canberra's unique natural landscape character and minimise visual impacts of new and infill development, and locate this development in areas that do not impact on important built heritage;
- The demand for further development in Canberra due to pressure from surrounding NSW and the Sydney corridor;

- An improved understanding about the natural environment and its regional context, leading to the need to better protect biodiversity within the ACT and regional ecological communities;
- Technological advances, including changes within the information and communication technology sector;
- The shift from public sector to diversifying economy, with the potential for growth in other sectors; and
- The shift within the public sector away from central coordination of office location.

As a part of the spatial planning process, the sustainability of various urban forms were considered. In so doing, a sustainability assessment was used to determine the social, environmental and economic costs and benefits of three different urban forms. The outcome of the option assessment was the preferred direction as follows:

A City of Choice - Outcome of the sustainability assessment

Population growth in Canberra / Queanbeyan to 430,000

Highest Sustainability Assessment Outcome: This option includes a sustainable rate of change in terms of housing cost and revenue to the ACT Government. While there are environmental impacts, the spatial distribution provides significant opportunities to enhance Canberra's economic and social disposition.

Low to medium risk option: Low risk factors included target population, macro-economic stability and private sector sentiment. Factors such as biodiversity, public sector revenue and employment targets were considered moderate risks.

Net revenue to Government: This option delivers net revenue to Government in the order of \$1.46 billion comprising total revenue of \$2.32 billion and total costs of \$860 million.

Population growth in Canberra / Queanbeyan to 500,000

Highest Sustainability Assessment Outcome: This option includes a sustainable rate of change in terms of housing cost and revenue to the ACT Government. While there are environmental impacts, the spatial distribution provides significant opportunities to enhance Canberra's economic and social disposition.

Low to medium risk option: Low risk factors included target population, macro-economic stability and private sector sentiment. Factors such as biodiversity, public sector revenue and employment targets were considered moderate risks.

Net revenue to Government: This option delivers net revenue to Government in the order of \$1.35 billion comprising total revenue of \$3.60 billion and total costs of \$2.25 billion.

Sustainable Transport Plan

The ACT Government is also developing a Sustainable Transport Plan that will feature as part of the Canberra Spatial Plan and therefore be linked to the

Canberra Plan. In recognising the critical role of transport in shaping the physical structure of a city and its performance, the Spatial Plan and Sustainable Transport Plan have been developed to ensure that the benefits of mutually supporting land use and transport practices are achieved. This is in line with the recently adopted National Charter for Integrated Transport and Land Use Planning, which the ACT has signed along with the Commonwealth and all other State and Territory Transport and Planning Ministers.

This Charter aims to enhance the sustainability of cities through transport systems that are more responsive to urban structures that seek to promote alternative forms of transport, reduce trip generation and create more cohesive communities through better neighbourhood design.

The Sustainable Transport Plan has a key role to play in delivering social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Roads will continue to dominate as the means of movement for the majority of people and freight in Australia in the foreseeable future. However, by shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design, and mix of land uses, integrated transport and land use planning can help to facilitate an efficient transport and land use system by:

- Reducing the need to travel;
- Reducing the length of journeys;
- Making it safer and easier for people to access services;
- Reducing the impact of transport on communities;
- Improving freight access to key terminals and improved freight flows;
- Providing for the efficient distribution of goods and services to business and community;
- Providing a choice of travel modes; and
- Ensuring flexibility to meet the demands of a changing economy and market environments.

ACT Greenhouse Strategy

The ACT Government has been actively pursuing a reduction in the greenhouse emissions attributable to ACT residents and businesses through the ACT Greenhouse Strategy released in 2000. The Strategy represents a comprehensive approach to the greenhouse issues across all sectors of the community.

The ACT Government is also a participant in the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program, which is administered in Australia by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives in collaboration with the Australian Greenhouse Office. Some 180 local councils, covering 72% of the Australian population, currently participate in CCP.

CCP encourages local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by working through a strategic framework, which comprises the following milestones:

1. key sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the council and community are identified and future emissions growth forecasted;

2. an emissions reduction goal is set;
3. a local greenhouse action plan is adapted to achieve the reduction goal;
4. the local greenhouse action plan is implemented; and
5. implementation of the action plan is monitored and reviewed to ensure its effectiveness.

The ACT was the first capital city in Australia to join CCP in 1998 after it set the ACT greenhouse gas reduction target to reduce emissions back to 1990 levels by 2008. The ACT was also the first jurisdiction to achieve milestone 4 when it released the ACT Greenhouse Strategy in early 2000. This strategy is currently being reviewed. When this review is completed next year, the ACT will have completed the requirements of milestone 5. At present less than 40 councils have achieved this milestone.

A range of other measures are also being supported and/or promoted by the ACT Government at a local and national level, including:

- The adoption of minimum standards for energy efficiency under the Building Code of Australia, but with a view to have these increased in the near future;
- Working with the ABCB and the Green Building Council to develop environmental performance measures for commercial and multi-storey residential buildings;
- The development of the National Urban Design Charter, land management practices to reduce environmental impacts;
- Significant tree legislation for urban trees;
- Local area heritage protection;
- Promotion of domestic solar hot water heaters through rebates and simplified approval policies;
- The convening of the National Summit on the 'Future of Australia's Cities and Towns' in Canberra in 2004.

4. A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The ACT Government's response to the Sustainable Cities inquiry is not and cannot afford to be confined to Canberra and its own initiatives, as the whole essence of sustainability is that the systems we depend upon are borderless. Canberra, like any other urban area, sits within a region, and the development that goes on around it can have significant impacts upon the well being of its community and surrounding environment, just as the activities of Canberra can impact adversely on those around it.

It is for this reason that the eight States and Territories have previously promoted to the Commonwealth Government, the need for a National Urban Policy, in order that self-interest is not put ahead of sound planning policy for all. Unfortunately the Federal Government has not seen fit to participate in this process, and therefore the States and Territories will be convening a

National Summit on the issues that affect the future development of Australia's cities and towns, in Canberra next year.

The Commonwealth will continue to be welcome to participate in this process, as it is critical to the well-being of all communities, the environment and the economy, that the Federal Government work in partnership with the States in addressing the significant issues that have the potential to impact on the sustainability of our cities.

Nor is this an issue confined to the political arena. Increasingly there is awareness amongst a number of key interest groups, ranging from industry, academic, professional, through to environmental. In essence, encapsulating the diversity of issues that affect the sustainability of cities. These interests were recently reflected in a joint communiqué prepared by the Planning Institute of Australia, titled 'Liveable Communities'. This communiqué was co-signed by the Property Council of Australia, the Australian Local Government Association and the Australian Conservation Foundation amongst others.

The Commonwealth Government, in response to a request from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects recently announced 2004 as the Year of the Built Environment, which will also provide an opportunity for the issue of sustainable cities to be highlighted.

Principal amongst the issues that will impact on the sustainability of Australia's cities are:

- Any strategy for sustainable cities must be holistic, having regard to the need to promote economic development, environmental management, social inclusion, high quality physical environments and cultural diversity. This does not, however, mean that we have to continue to operate within existing paradigms in order to achieve a good quality of life. The pressures of globalisation force us all to behave in relatively predictable ways, especially in relation to every city competing with its neighbour for investment. This does not always result in the best outcomes. Measuring comparative advantage alongside competitive advantage is likely to be more sustainable in the long term.
- The 'operationalisation' of what is meant by sustainable development. Is it in fact a commitment to ecological sustainability and therefore keeping our use of resources and creation of waste to 1993 targets, or is it merely a means of delaying the time when the impacts will be even more apparent than they are today? The National Strategy for ESD is an excellent starting point, but with the Commonwealth Government less than committed to international protocols, it makes it difficult for States and Territories to act either collaboratively or unilaterally. This requires each jurisdiction to develop a policy/strategy that is designed to fit the circumstances of each. In the ACT we have the People, Place Prosperity Policy. As governments closest to the people, State/Territory and local governments are better placed to bring about change, but they need the support of the Commonwealth in setting national targets, providing resources, etc.
- *"The city is an open ecosystem, having inputs of energy and materials. The main environmental problems (and economic costs) are related to sustaining growth of these inputs and managing the increased outputs.*

By looking at the city as a whole and by analysing the pathways along which energy and materials (and pollution) move, it is possible to begin to conceive of management systems and technologies which allow for the reintegration of natural processes, increasing the efficiency of resource use, the recycling of wastes as valuable materials and the conservation of (and even production of) energy.” (Source: Newman, Sustainability, Urban Design and Transport, 2003)

- Population distribution and demographic change will continue to shape the development of cities, both in terms of geographic spread and physical composition. Linked to this is also the issue of socio-economic profile, resulting in a number of significant and dynamic forces that mean that the profile of today's cities will not necessarily suit the occupiers of tomorrow's society. As the population ages and the size of households reduces, an increasingly complex set of expectations is emerging, where a single product of housing no longer meets the needs of every member of the community. It is fundamental to the sustainable development of Australia's cities that a national policy is developed for Australia's population in order that appropriate forward planning can be undertaken for the provision of services, anticipating the likely demand for resources and to more evenly manage different pressures facing cities, such as too much population growth in Sydney and not enough in Adelaide or Hobart.
- The physical and environmental footprint of cities is increasingly recognised as a symbolic way of measuring the impact of urban development. The sprawl of Australia's cities reflects the way in which land is viewed as an infinite resource and fails to recognise the hidden subsidies (now well documented by most major cities in Australia, which in some cases, can be as much as \$45,000 per lot – Sydney) associated with the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and services. The environmental footprint also acknowledges the level of resources required to satisfy the consumption cycle of each individual, which in the case of Australia is equivalent to an American, which in turn is at least four times greater than most non-western nations. This use of land and resources is both wasteful and unsustainable, not only from an environmental perspective, but from an economic and social one as well. Economically because it is highly inefficient and socially, because it is typically associated with a form of development that fails to create a sense of neighbourhood and therefore social inclusion.
- The loss of productive agricultural land at the edge of cities, which have typically been developed on or adjacent to the richest agricultural land due to historic proximity to water and hinterlands capable of feeding the population centres. This loss is exaggerated not simply through the direct use of land for development, but also due to the conflicts created through the encroachment of urban development.
- Transport is increasingly recognised as significantly impacting on the performance of cities and the well being of communities. With the advent of the private car and cost effective distribution of freight by road, roads and traffic have increasingly dominated cities. In some cases this has significantly contributed to poor air quality, reduction in

public safety, a loss of quality of life, noise and physical intrusion. Yet these changes have provided increased scope for access to employment, leisure and other services. This is not true for everyone, with both an increasing level of disadvantage for some members of society and an aging population profile, who rely on effective public transport services that finds it increasingly difficult to maintain any semblance of viability. Public transport also has difficulty servicing low-density sprawling suburbs, where the urban structure makes access difficult and promotes the use of cars. There are a range of alternative settlement structures that can better promote transit-oriented development, including more flexibility in the mix of uses and sensitively designed and located higher density buildings.

- Water is becoming a barometer of sustainable development as Australian cities struggle to provide sufficient levels of water for current patterns of consumption, as well as water quality. The recent droughts across Australia have forced many urban centres to introduce water restrictions, which in some cases have challenged Australian cultural values in respect to both activities and landscape settings. The national initiatives for Water Sensitive Urban Design and increasing environmental flows for major river systems are welcome and need to be built upon through exploration of gray and brown water reuse, improved stormwater harvesting and reducing water consumption.

“The most efficacious planning policy might be to encourage greater degrees of water independence in development including policies designed to encourage local capture and use of rainwater, greater local recycling of waste water together with the use of network as a ‘backup’ supply during emergencies. Such a development policy, supported by appropriate pricing policies, would have a major beneficial effect in reducing the investment required for public infrastructure and would...reduce the pressure on river flows thus leaving more water for environmental flows in the catchment.” (Source: Troy, The use of Residential Water Consumption as an Urban Planning Tool: a Pilot Study in Adelaide, 2003).



- The consumption of energy is often in excess of what would be required through better design of the structure of cities and the form of the buildings within them. Each planning jurisdiction is currently in the throws of developing strategic plans for the future development of their respective capital cities and in conjunction with the Australian Building Codes Board, promoting increased energy efficiency for domestic and commercial buildings. These approaches will remain relatively benign, however, in the face of consumption patterns associated with western lifestyles that are inherently wasteful. The National Framework for Energy Efficiency being developed by the Energy Ministerial Council will provide significant impetus in this regard and needs to be coordinated with the activities of other Ministerial Councils, particularly Local Government and Planning.
- Managing the production of waste through the way in which products are manufactured and consumed has a significant multiplier on the use of energy, resources and land for the purpose of disposal.

Environmental impacts are interdependent on the way in which resources are extracted, converted and disposed of. Cities are the engine rooms of this cycle and therefore policy intervention in this area can have a significant impact.

- The structure and form of cities, and the way people behave within them is increasingly recognised as having substantial influence on the well being of individuals and communities. Socio-economic status, demographics and cultural background should not distinguish the opportunities cities can provide for all members of society. Housing choice and cost, access to employment and services, infrastructure provision and the like necessarily determine the degree to which people can feel included as members of a community. Increasingly there are large numbers of people who for one reason or another find they are directly or indirectly excluded from participating as a valued member of society, which for them means that the city is no longer capable of sustaining their quality of life. Improved urban design outcomes for the form and structure of cities can help facilitate appropriate and sensitive urban regeneration, which is necessary not only to assist in reducing the sprawl of cities, but also to maintain levels of social transaction within communities and optimise the use of established infrastructure.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the inquiry take the following recommendations into consideration:

-  Support for a National Summit on the Future of Australia's Cities and Towns.
-  Support for a National Urban Policy.
-  Support for a National Population Policy.
-  Support for more definitive action in relation to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, much of which emanate from centres of urban activity, including transport and energy use.
-  Support for national initiatives to reduce waste through the production and consumption cycle.
-  Support for national initiatives to encourage 'best practice' water management for centres of urban activity.
-  Optimise the use of the Building Code of Australia to achieve improved environmental performance for all new buildings
-  Identification of national measures for monitoring progress towards sustainability
-  Explore the possible use of financial levers to progress sustainability, including those relating to transport and energy use
-  Re-establish the Urban Design Taskforce and charge it with the responsibility to work across professional disciplines, different levels of government and with industry to implement the soon to be developed National Urban Design Charter

- 🌐 Canberra based Commonwealth agencies taking a leadership role in helping the ACT achieve its sustainability targets.