

AUSTRALIAN SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

A CALL TO ACTION

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) calls for a streamlined, co-ordinated approach to urban management policy. ASBEC strongly urges the Australian Government to appoint a Minister for Cities and Urban Development to deliver integrated building, precinct and city policy and programs, supported by:

- *A Federal Minister for Cities and Urban Development*
- *A Cities and Urban Development Cabinet Committee*
- *A COAG Cities and Urban Development Ministerial Council*
- *A Cities and Urban Development NGO Roundtable*
- *A Cities and Urban Development Department.*

Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on the planet. It is estimated by Treasury that by 2050, our cities could accommodate around 85 per cent of our 36 million plus population. These cities will also be the drivers of the nation's economy and productivity.

The challenges our cities face, such as population growth, traffic congestion, housing affordability, climate change and environmental disasters, demographic change, social marginalisation, infrastructure decline and environmental degradation, will only be successfully addressed through an efficient, effective and nationally-harmonised government response.

Bold leadership is required to foster greater consistency and alignment across the policy and planning initiatives affecting our built environment. An integrated and collaborative approach is necessary to encourage innovation and excellence, break down silos, use resources more efficiently and ensure our cities are liveable, affordable and sustainable.

ASBEC calls immediately for:

- A **Federal Minister for Cities and Urban Development** – A Federal 'champion' is urgently required for Australia's major cities to drive the transparent, accountable and adaptable reforms needed to better connect urban built environment policies and programs across all levels of government.
- A **Cities and Urban Development Cabinet Committee** – to include key federal ministers whose portfolios involve decisions or activities pertaining to urban centres.
- A **COAG Cities and Urban Development Ministerial Council and IGA** – chaired by the Federal Minister for Cities and involving representation by state and territory Treasurers and Planning Ministers, as well as local governments. The Council's agenda should be established through an Intergovernmental Agreement and should include a five yearly review of cities' metropolitan planning systems (building and embedding the current capital cities review underway by COAG).
- A **Cities and Urban Development NGO Roundtable** – Our cities are the result of decisions, investments and activities by governments, businesses and communities. Business and community groups should have a direct voice to government on issues involving our cities. The Regional Development Australia (RDA) network should be transferred to the new Federal Minister for Cities and provide an active and effective, ongoing advisory mechanism.

- A **Cities and Urban Development Department** – The Major Cities Unit should be transformed into a Department tasked with developing and co-ordinating policy which involves urban outcomes. This can draw on the example of the US Office of Sustainable Communities which co-ordinates federal housing and transport investment with local land use decisions to reduce transport costs for families, improve housing affordability, save energy, and increase access to housing and employment opportunities.

The Australian Government's move to develop a national urban policy is a welcome step towards an integrated approach to issues affecting urban areas. ASBEC believes this should involve measurable and achievable actions, as outlined above.

The design and development of our cities must not be left to chance. Urban policy should not be spread across numerous disparate federal agencies working in isolation. Nor should it be inconsistently-managed across eight state and territory governments, and more than 500 local governments.

ASBEC has identified nearly 40 Australian Government programs, strategies and initiatives which impact the built environment (See Appendix). These traverse eight ministers and their portfolio departments encompassing:

1. Prime Minister and Cabinet (including COAG)
2. Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
3. Infrastructure and Transport
4. Sustainability, Water, Environment, Population and Communities
5. Resources, Energy and Tourism
6. Innovation, Industry and Science
7. Regional Australia
8. Finance.

Clearly, a co-ordinated approach to urban policy development is required to lift the performance of our cities, to meet Australians' desire for sustainable and liveable cities, to make our cities more resilient to climate change and environmental disasters and to maximise the opportunities of our cities as drivers of Australia's productivity and innovation.

A strategic and streamlined approach to the policies and programs which apply to our cities and their built environment will lead to efficiencies, cost savings, and will ensure Australian cities are better equipped to tackle the challenges of a growing population and the associated stresses placed on our city eco-systems.

International best practice: The European Union

The EU states "Cities and metropolitan areas are the engines of economic development", as outlined in the EU *The urban dimension in European Union policies*, released in 2010. The EU established the Inter-service Group on Urban Development in December 2005. It is chaired by the Regional Policy DG and pursues the following three objectives:

- To promote an integrated approach to sustainable urban development when programming and implementing the assistance of the Structural Funds
- To identify the initiatives under the various EU policies aiming to support sustainable development of urban areas and to ensure the necessary cooperation between the Commission services in this respect

- To ensure partnership between the Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the associations of towns and urban areas and to establish regular dialogue allowing the exchange of views and the gathering of observations from these bodies on the consideration given to the urban dimension.

Who we are

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) is the peak body of key organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia.

ASBEC members consists of industry and professional associations, non-government organisations and government observers who are involved in the planning, design, delivery and operation of our built environment, and are concerned with the social and environmental impacts of this sector. (See below for a full list)

ASBEC is a non-profit volunteer organisation. Members commit their time, resources and energy to developing practical opportunities for a more sustainable built environment

Currently ASBEC is working on a 'Cities for the Future' which seeks to develop alternative frameworks for land use, transport, economic and environmental outcomes and community planning.

ASBEC Members include:

Alternative Technology Association
 Association of Accredited Certifiers
 Association of Building Sustainability Assessors
 Australian Conservation Foundation
 Australian Green Infrastructure Council
 Australian Institute of Architects
 Australian Institute of Building
 Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors
 Bond University
 Chartered Institute of Building Australasia
 Clean Energy Council
 Consult Australia
 CornetGlobal - Australia, NewZealand
 The Energy Efficiency Council
 Engineers Australia
 Facility Management Association of Australia
 Good Environmental Choice Australia
 Green Building Council of Australia
 Planning Institute of Australia
 Property Council of Australia
 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
 Oceania
 Standards Australia
 Think Brick Australia
 University of New South Wales

Observer members

Australian Building Codes Board
 Australian Procurement & Construction Council
 City of Melbourne
 Council of Capital City Lord Mayors
 Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
 NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change
 NT Department of Planning & Infrastructure
 Plumbing Industry Commission
 QLD Department of Infrastructure and Planning
 QLD Department of Public Works
 SA Department of the Premier and Cabinet
 Sustainability Victoria
 Victorian Building Commission
 Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development
 VicUrban
 WA Department of Treasury and Finance

Appendix: Built Environment Policy and Program Matrix as at 24 February 2011

