Investing in Cities Essential for Productivity, Prosperity and a Better Standard of Living

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The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council today called for new investment in our cities recommending renewed action by all governments to increase the productivity, prosperity and liveability of Australia’s cities.

“With the release yesterday of the Australian Government’s long-awaited State of Australian Cities Report, the importance of investing in our cities has never been clearer”, said ASBEC President Ken Maher.

“Poor urban policy and design causes more than just traffic jams and air pollution. We already know Australia is sitting on a $53 billion per year cost of congestion time bomb; imagine what that means for the quality of life of the average commuter, let alone lost productivity. The greatest value can be achieved from infrastructure investment if it is integrated with the planning and design of our cities.”

ASBEC calls on the Federal Government to provide national leadership and coordination through a Minister for Cities, supporting urban infrastructure investment with state and territory governments delivering projects, planning, and measuring success through clear indicators. Local Government retains their critical link to meet the needs of their communities and deliver best practice design and sustainable local urban environments. A partnership with industry across government will support this policy, providing the expertise to identify best practice and implement it on the ground.

“For example, The Urban Design Protocol, Creating Places for People, identifies factors key to good urban design, including engaging and connecting people with each other, and increasing liveability through the design of vibrant spaces that feel safe and are easy to get around. We need to see this protocol adopted across all spheres of government in Australia.” said Ken.

Jonathan Cartledge, Chair of ASBEC’s Cities Task Group said “With a record infrastructure spend it is inconceivable that we would not have a national focus on how to maximise the value of this investment for the cities in which we live work and play. This policy framework presents an opportunity for policy-makers to achieve multiple objectives across a wide range of portfolios whether in health, the environment, business or transport policy.”

“Governments and the private sector need to work together collaboratively to deliver a 30 year Infrastructure Plan for Australia, providing a blueprint for our cities as they grow. Consistent indicators are also needed to demonstrate the performance of our cities across the country, incentivise best practice and support long-term evidence-based policy development.”

“With so many Australians living in our cities, and so much of our health, economy and communities dependent on them, we need to act now.” said Jonathan.

Read: Investing in Cities: Prioritising a Cities and Urban Policy Framework for productivity, prosperity and a better standard of living

For comment, contact:
  Ken Maher, ASBEC President
  Jonathan Cartledge, ASBEC Cities Task Group Chair, Director of Policy, Consult Australia
About ASBEC

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) is a collective of leading industry organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia. ASBEC’s membership consists of a range of key industry government and academic organisations who are involved in the planning, design, delivery and operation of our built environment and who are concerned with the economic, social and environmental performance of the sector.

ASBEC’s activities, including research and policy development on built environment issues, are an example of a collaborative, co-ordinated approach undertaken across all segments of the built environment. ASBEC works actively to develop and promote leading practice in the design, planning and operation of our cities, at a buildings, precincts and citywide scale.