



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Submission

Australian Government

**Our Cities – building a productive, sustainable
and liveable future Discussion Paper and
A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia
Issues Paper**

March 2011

Our Cities and a Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia

Combined Submission by the AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

1. Introduction

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) as the peak national body for Local Government in Australia is pleased to make the following submission on both the Australian Government's Our Cities Discussion Paper and the A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia Issues Paper. Given the strategic intent of both papers and the close relationship between urban planning and sustainable population management, ALGA considered it sensible for any response to consider these issues in an integrated manner.

ALGA appreciates the challenges raised by many of the issues and questions raised in the Our Cities discussion paper with the exception of some of the comments made on future governance arrangements of Cities. ALGA has long held the view that it is legitimate and necessary for the Australia Federal Government to play a more active role in urban policy, and local government would welcome the development of an explicit National Urban Policy and approach to a sustainable population strategy.

ALGA is a federated body, comprised of all state and territory local government associations and the ACT Government which represents the interests of local government at a national level. This submission should not be read in isolation from any other submissions the Australian Government receives from the state and territory local government associations or individual councils. Local government is a diverse institution and its very nature makes it necessary to respond to national challenges and policy development issues in ways that best reflect the particular circumstances and geography of individual communities.

This submission seeks to only provide an overarching comment on the many broad questions asked in the respective papers and to highlight the specific expectations that local government would have of a national urban policy and sustainable population strategy.

Local government would welcome further opportunities to develop and contribute to such significant national strategic initiatives.

2. Local Government in Australia

Local government in Australia is a dynamic and extremely diverse sector, consisting of more than 560 councils. These range from the Brisbane City Council (population close to 1 million and expenditure of \$1.4 billion in 2005-06) to councils like Jerilderie Shire (population less than 2,000 people and an annual expenditure of less than \$7 million).

Nationally, local government has an annual expenditure of more than \$25 billion, which represents around 2 per cent of the national GDP. In employment terms, local government accounts for 1.4% of the Australian workforce (about 175,000 employees). More importantly, this sphere of government provides essential services and infrastructure that serve as the foundation for local and regional communities. For many rural, regional and remote communities, local government is often the only institutional presence and one of the key drivers of economic activity.

The key benefits and strengths of local government include:

- Wide and established networks of political governance and public administration;
- Strong links and accountability to the communities it represents;
- Extensive understanding of local needs and concerns;
- Practical service orientation and sound organisational skills which make it capable of innovative, timely and flexible response;
- Experience in developing integrated planning systems; and
- Experience in playing a significant role in all aspects of planning and place management, including direct provision and management of housing.

Many of these factors are relevant when specifically looking at local government's extensive role played in the housing policy area. See Appendix 1.

Australian local government is established under State/Territory legislation and its structures, powers and functions are determined by that legislation. In all jurisdictions in the last 10-20 years, the relevant legislation creating and regulating local government has been reviewed and significantly amended or replaced with new legislation that gives local councils greater general competence powers.

Local government is a democratically elected sphere of government, representative of and directly accountable to local and regional communities. The fact that it is elected and responsible for a broad range of services in a clearly defined geographic area, means that local government is better placed than the other two spheres of government to understand and meet the needs of local communities and to respond to those needs in ways that are appropriate to local conditions. Local government is multifunctional and, unlike other spheres of government, is able to combine and integrate services tailored to meet local needs.

These characteristics of local government also raise some dilemmas in the management of local areas. For example, local governments are often treated as the servants of State/Territory Governments, creating tensions over direction setting and accountability. The fact that local governments also have a measure of choice over the range of non-statutory functions in which they get involved, as well as the manner in which they interpret their statutory functions, results in a considerable range of differences and diversity in local councils within and between jurisdictions.

The diversity of local government is apparent through a number of characteristics, including the different powers and functions, the level of financial resources, population size, geographic area, location and availability of human resources. Any consideration of local government's role in urban policy or the sustainable management of populations must therefore be cognisant of the diversity of roles and functions and the diversity of issues confronting local governments throughout Australia.

3. National Urban Policy – Why it is Needed.

ALGA welcomes the Commonwealth's recent interest in urban policy. Local government has long called for strong national engagement and leadership in this area. The release of the Discussion Paper reaffirms many of the reasons why it is so crucial for Australia to have an agreed national urban policy and therefore why local government would support the Commonwealth playing a more explicit and collaborative role in pursuing a national cities policy.

The widespread nature of problems facing Australian cities and towns is well documented, as highlighted in last year's State of the Cities Report. The range of challenges facing modern cities makes urban policy highly complex. A single level of government cannot fully address these interrelated challenges, nor take advantage of the many opportunities our cities and towns provides. Given this situation, local government would argue that is legitimate for the Commonwealth to have a key interest in urban policy and that its role in this space should be an active and involved one.

What local government is specifically seeking in any future national urban policy is a clear mechanism to manage ongoing interactions between all levels of government and deliver better coordination amongst federal departments and agencies in how they most appropriately respond to the particular challenges facing Australia's diverse network of cities and towns.

ALGA welcomed the COAG initiative and subsequent agreement for states and territories to develop capital city strategic plans that are consistent with the nine criteria for future strategic planning of capital cities by January 2012. This step, together with the overarching objective of ensuring Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable and socially inclusive and are well placed to meet future challenges and growth is a positive and worthwhile national initiative. This work can be seen as a first step in providing a framework to guide the roles played by all levels of government in addressing the opportunities and challenges of major Australian cities.

However, any national urban policy will be dependent on several other contributing factors. These include adequate and agreed funding arrangements, more integrated strategic planning frameworks, efficient and transparent development assessment processes, explicit performance criteria and real opportunities for community involvement and engagement.

Furthermore, ALGA would argue that it will also be necessary to establish other mechanisms that seek to address the challenges of regional cities and

specifically address how enhanced coordination with regional Australia might best be delivered.

A national conversation on the future shape and character of the Australia's cities and regional centres, the engine rooms of growth, innovation and opportunity is long overdue. The real challenge is for this conversation to lead to real action and long term policy leadership from the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has rightly argued that a National Urban Policy has the potential to provide a blueprint to:

- better connect infrastructure with work and opportunity in our cities so we can reduce people's dependency on the car;
- develop high quality public transport and infrastructure systems to ease congestion and improve quality of life;
- reduce the carbon footprint of our cities and adapt them to the consequences of climate change;
- improve urban planning and design to better reflect Australia's increasingly diverse lifestyles, boost access and affordability;
- get the right mix of urban density and renewal strategies; and
- provide the necessary guidance from a national perspective for all levels of government, the private sector and the Australian community to meet the long term needs and aspirations of the nation.

Local government agrees that national leadership is vital, but appreciates that lasting and meaningful change will only be achieved when all three levels of government are sharing the responsibility and working together to achieve agreed outcomes. Local government accepts that it has a major role in contributing to national goals, but is heavily reliant on resource and policy support from the other levels of government.

Both the Commonwealth and Council of Australian Governments (COAG) are currently pursuing many national policy initiatives that have the potential to directly and indirectly impact the future agendas for our cities and regions.

These include:

- capital city strategic planning;
- National Planning Systems Performance Benchmarking;
- Electronic development assessment (eDA);
- Implementing National planning principles;
- promoting affordable housing and land supply;
- increasing competition policy;
- Infrastructure Australia funding;
- Rollout of the National Broadband Network;
- Implementation of a National Disaster Resilience Strategy; and
- Addressing the mitigation and adaptation challenges of climate change;

What is missing however is a framework that ensures that these various national initiatives and all policies of the Commonwealth are coordinated and share a common goal in terms of the future development of Australia's diverse cities and towns.

A national urban policy will require the Commonwealth to be explicit in what role it will play in delivering a prosperous and sustainable Australia. This will require clarity in how all three levels of government can best work together to meet the specific challenges facing our cities and towns.

A national urban policy will need to provide the necessary strategic and spatial directions to guide future public and private investment in areas such as major transport and transit developments, employment generating developments, housing and supporting infrastructure provision.

However before any national urban policy is finalised, it will be necessary to:

1. engage local government and states and territories formally in any institutional arrangements;
2. secure funding sources to address the deficiencies in key urban infrastructure, because this infrastructure underpins the social, economic and environmental life of those living and working in our cities and towns.
3. Review how the Commonwealth can introduce a place based model into how it delivers its programs and services; and
4. Test detailed policy positions with the Australian community and communicate clearly the benefits of Australia having a formal national urban policy, and how this relates to regional and rural development initiatives.

4. Local Government's Roles in Urban Planning and Service Delivery

It is critical that local government is an equal partner in the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of any future national urban policy. Local government plans and community aspirations should therefore be the platform by which broader plans are built.

The role of local government in relation to the planning and provision of community infrastructure is significant, but varies from state to state and even within States. Local government's involvement in roads, recreation facilities, sewerage, drainage, waste disposal and environmental protection are particularly significant and well recognised. However, its role in the planning and provision of human services or community infrastructure such as public libraries, children's playgrounds, senior citizens centres, youth centres, recreation and sporting facilities and other community facilities such as meeting rooms and multi-purpose halls, has increased over time and are not well recognised by other spheres of government.

Local government plays an important role in land use planning and development approvals systems in all state jurisdictions of Australia. Councils develop strategic plans for the future development of their municipalities and shires, coordinate and provide a range of physical and community infrastructure, guide the application of land use and development zones through

a planning instrument and administer that local planning instrument on a daily basis.

As the 'primary gateway' for those wishing to develop land, including the vast majority of occasional one-off builders or developers, local government provides an essential service to the community and the economy. Unfortunately and unfairly however, councils are held responsible for the performance of all parts of the planning system, much of which are not in their control, such as the responsiveness and requirements of state planning departments and referral agencies, or the perverse and unintended impacts of Federal government policies. It is the development assessment component of the planning systems that is the most confrontational and the core subject to greatest scrutiny and criticism, even though the vast majority of development applications across Australia are determined efficiently and effectively by councils (either under delegation or by full council).

The primary role of state or territory government is to establish a planning framework through legislation and monitor its operation. All planning systems have common elements such as state, regional and local policies, regulations that control the use and development of land and administrative processes that guide notification, referral to non-planning agencies and judicial review mechanisms. Significant complexity is added by a range of other legislation that interacts with planning systems, particularly with respect to matters of an environmental nature.

The Commonwealth Government has traditionally played a relatively passive role in the area of land use and development planning, even though the impacts of federal policies have major implications for the sustainability of Australian cities and towns.

Local government believe it must continue to play a role in urban policy. Councils play a critical role in representing the needs and wishes of local communities and they play an important role in both protecting and developing the cities that our citizens want. Any national policy based on ecologically sustainable and democratic principles will accept that in the majority of instances local solutions will be the best method for delivering agreed national goals.

5. What policy approach and operating environment do we need for our cities and towns and to sustainably manage Australia's population?

Whilst the cities discussion paper and sustainable population issues paper comprehensively address the relevant issues, no attempt has been made to put forward potential models and actions required to introduce a future focussed national urban policy or sustainable population strategy. This is disappointing given that in recent years Federal/State financial frameworks have moved towards greater levels of outcome orientated funding and there is an increasing appreciation by industry and researchers of the important role planning can play in delivering agreed national outcomes.

Local government appreciates the position adopted by the Commonwealth when it indicated that its future infrastructure investments, particularly in capital cities, will increasingly align with metropolitan strategic plans. This position is consistent with COAG's decision in late 2009 to ensure implementation of the

national objectives and criteria for future strategic planning of capital cities. If implemented, this policy commitment will have progressively greater relevance to local land use planning and subsequent urban infrastructure investment.

5.1 Integrated Area Planning and Quality Urban Design

Effective implementation of strategies and actions in response to complex policy challenges requires a comprehensive legislative, fiscal and structural response, across agencies and jurisdictions, supported by planning decisions. An agreed national urban policy, supported by adequate funding and inter-governmental agreements is a key mechanism missing in this debate.

Policies at a state level often conflict or are unresolved, which means that they rely on site by site resolution, often in a confrontational environment, determined on an individual development application/permit basis.

The many policy challenges facing Australia, demand strong policy responses at a state and national level to provide the necessary guidance for public and private investment and transparency for the community. Decisions have implications for places, and there is a need for both place-based decision-making and quality urban design to be fully recognised.

Integrated area planning, on a place-based model with quality urban design considerations needs to be adopted by all levels of government.

5.2 The identification, release and development of land and the timely provision of related physical and social infrastructure

As previously argued, local governments' planning functions involve the identification of land for urban development (especially for housing, employment and a range of supporting uses) and, depending on jurisdiction, subdivision control. However, in most of the capital cities, local government is not involved in the monitoring and coordination of land release for urban development. The States are responsible for managing these systems.

In other areas outside the capital cities, local government's involvement in the identification, release and development of land for housing and the provision of related local infrastructure varies considerably. In some jurisdictions, local government plays a strategic and important co-ordinating role, whereas in other jurisdictions it plays a less prominent role depending on the extent to which the State retains control over certain functions.

A national urban policy and sustainable population strategy would need to address future population growth and infrastructure standards, and subsequent infrastructure funding and implementation responsibilities.

5.3 The efficiency and transparency of different planning and approval processes for land uses.

In most cases the council, with the support of the state planning department, is responsible for preparing and endorsing the planning scheme and development controls. The responsibility for making decisions on development applications is, in most cases, either delegated to senior planning staff or referred to a

committee of Council. In most states there are serious consequences for councils if they do not comply with the processes for decision making set down by the States, let alone the legal costs of defending decisions in court.

Local councils exercise their development assessment functions by assessing applications for development and granting approval, granting approval with conditions, or refusing an application. Many stakeholders often refer to the processes as 'development approval' processes. By doing so, there is an implicit assumption that all or any application should be approved. This is not always the case, as local councils also have the power to refuse an application if it fails to meet the objectives of its planning scheme or development controls, or to approve a development application with conditions if it believes the proposal should proceed but with some variation to ameliorate its external effects. These decisions are usually made by professional staff and are generally appealable to Council for review or in some cases can be appealed to an external body established at the jurisdictional level.

Almost all States and territories have undertaken major reviews of their planning systems and/or development assessment processes to improve their transparency and efficiency. Many of these reviews were aimed at improving the operation of local planning and development assessment systems and delivering better urban and regional outcomes for communities. Regardless of the policy changes, the efficiency and level of transparency is questionable, and it remains very difficult to gain any national perspective on how Australia's cities and towns are developing, other than crude affordable housing statistics.

While there may be individual cases where a decision on a major development has taken longer than originally anticipated or been delayed for some reason, it is important to understand that local councils are required by State planning legislation to obtain the necessary approvals or concurrences from a range of agencies (both state and Federal) and the time frames for these are not within the Council's power to control.

To understand the impacts of the planning system on the sustainable functioning of cities and towns, it is critical that all governments introduce mechanisms to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of all parts of the planning system (strategic and statutory) and provide for regular policy improvements. Adequate funding for e-planning/eDA should be seen as high priority.

5.4 The efficiency and transparency of taxes, levies and charges imposed at all stages of the development planning process;

Council rates are a form of property taxation for local government and are the most significant source of local government revenue for most local governments. Rates vary enormously due to differences between urban, rural and remote locations, variations in the cost of providing services, as well as the local government's ability to levy such charges.

Local government rates are not a fee for service. As council rates are a system of taxation the rates paid do not directly relate to the services used by each

ratepayer. Each council provides a unique range of services for its local area and different areas have different needs and priorities. This provides each council with the challenge to:

- raise sufficient revenue so it can provide an appropriate level of goods and services for its area; and
- equitably distribute the rate burden across its ratepayers, taking account of the principles of taxation.

The principles of taxation include equity, the benefit principle, the ability to pay principle, the efficiency principle, and the simplicity principle. Local Government must balance and weigh up the application of these overlapping principles with the need to raise revenue to meet local expectations and basic needs.

Any discussion about local government's fees and charges for its planning and development assessment functions must take account of the fact that they are not set to recover the full costs incurred. Despite moves by other agencies and government corporations over the past couple of decades to move toward full cost recovery for services provided, local government has not done so, partly because of the complexity of trying to estimate the costs incurred for each individual application which varies depending on the complexity of the application, and partly because in many jurisdictions the fees or charges are controlled by State Governments and local government does not have any discretion to depart from those charges.

In most but not all jurisdictions, local Councils can levy a developer contribution toward the cost of providing basic infrastructure to new developments, including residential developments. These charges are generally based on full cost recovery for the additional infrastructure required to service the development and are closely regulated by the State Governments. Generally, local Councils have limited discretion to vary the way in which the charges are calculated.

Local government would welcome the opportunity to further its partnership with the Australian Government by working together to identify constructive general purpose funding reform options that more adequately meet community needs and fulfil the Commonwealth's objectives as set out in the *Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*. Such reforms would enable local government to more fully meet the diverse economic, social and environmental needs of local and regional communities, whilst delivering on important national priorities being pursued at the Australian Government and COAG levels.

5.5 Investment in Infrastructure Provision (especially local and regional)

Whilst major infrastructure for our cities and towns are required (telecommunications, heavy and light rail, airports, ports, water and sewer, waste management, teaching institutions, hospitals, stadiums and so on), local and regional infrastructure is equally important. Local government is responsible for more than \$12 billion of community infrastructure (not including local roads). This infrastructure provides the social and economic backbone for many communities throughout Australia, particularly those in rural and regional

areas that are continuing to experience economic hardship exacerbated by increasingly unfavourable weather and climate change.

The funding allocated by the Australian Government to support the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program since 2008-09 was warmly welcomed by local communities across the nation and is much needed. Further, local government welcomed the financial stimulus that we provided under the Australian Government's *Nation Building - Economic Stimulus Plan* to also deliver regional and community infrastructure. This funding has made an important contribution in helping councils to meet the backlog and underspend on this community infrastructure that has accumulated over recent decades.

However, feedback from the local government sector indicates more needs to be done. Well-located, well-designed and properly maintained community infrastructure helps produce better quality outcomes for Australian communities and facilitates social inclusion. It also helps achieve other important social and regional policy outcomes, including attraction and retention of skilled workers, preventative health (through the use of walking tracks, cycle paths, swimming pools, parks and other recreational facilities), social cohesion and tolerance (for example, positive ageing), builds social capital and enables broad-based education and learning (through the provision of galleries, libraries and museums). For some groups in the community local government facilities are their only means to access ongoing lifelong learning, interact socially and undertake mental and physical health and fitness activities.

ALGA acknowledges the regional infrastructure funding commitments made in the period following the 2010 Federal Election but notes that these commitments do not specifically relate to local government infrastructure and are not targeted to local government itself. ALGA has requested that the Australian Government commit further local government community infrastructure funding in the 2011-12 Budget, at the level of \$300 million per annum over the next 4 years. This will enable all local councils to plan and deliver adequate and appropriate community infrastructure across all areas of Australia and enhance their resilience in the face of less favourable economic conditions.¹

Given that the provision of infrastructure (in type, standard and timeliness) is a major determinant by which to assess the sustainability of Australian cities and populations, supporting funding models will need to be resolved and agreed upon.

5.6 Improving Governance and Community Involvement.

Ultimately this is one of the most important aspects that requires addressing when considering a national urban policy and managing the needs and desires of Australians. ALGA agrees that the lack of integration and poor strategic

¹ See for example, the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics report (June 2009), *Global Economic downturn – some implications for Australian Local Governments*, which concluded '[a]s the Commonwealth's infrastructure spending flows to local economies, their ability to withstand the negative effects of the global downturn and adjust quickly when it has passed, will continue to improve' (p.5) – see <http://www.bitre.gov.au/info.aspx?ResourceId=720&NodeId=111>

alignment of metropolitan planning and infrastructure delivery detracts from productivity, sustainability and liveability of cities. Local government accepts that the question of governance needs to be revisited but rejects the assertion that 'fragmentation of local governments in some of our largest cities' is by inference one of the key problems Australia needs to solve.

Local government has long argued that enhanced governance structures and more efficient service delivery is not solved by simply amalgamating existing local governments, and thereby having fewer but larger councils looking after our urban areas. The Grattan Institute's *Cities, Who Decides* report, noted that successful cities are those that have developed robust approaches to public engagement, consistent strategic direction, cross sectoral collaboration and regional cooperation. In the Grattan Institute's report, no particular governance structure was linked with success nor was there any evidence to suggest that larger and fewer local governments would enhance the functioning of a city.²

A similar finding was made in a research investigation into federal fiscal arrangements in Australia, with reference to the specific potential impact on urban settlements³. When examining the problems of coordination associated with attempting to manage the many pressures and challenges of urban development and redevelopment, the authors of the report concluded that the urban governance challenge cannot be resolved by a 'single best solution'. They go on to argue that "there is no reason in principle, why the problems of urban areas cannot be managed cooperatively or coordinatively by pre-existing local governments, with appropriate encouragement (or incentives) offered by the states". What is more important is finding a model "which encourages ownership of solutions, as well as of the problems, by all major stakeholders are important ingredients".

It is regrettable that the discussion paper implies that amalgamation of local government is an area worth pursuing and says little about the need for stronger community engagement, participation and collaboration. There will always be local problems, for which local solutions generally can be expected to work best. To amalgamate all urban local governments into one large multi – purpose government may help to address issues requiring substantial coordination, but at the cost of reducing the political voice of the people on those many issues that do not.

ALGA would ask that the Australian Government consider the findings from a current research project being undertaken by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government in partnership with the Local Government Association of South Australia. The paper - *From Governing Organisations to Governing Communities* - will draw on international literature to review concepts of governance, summarise community governance theories and frameworks and begin to explore the application of community governance approaches by Australian Councils.

² Grattan Institute, *Cities, Who Decides* October 2010

³ Walsh and Thomson, *Federal Fiscal Arrangements in Australia - Their Potential Impact on Urban Settlements*, 1994.

To successfully manage Australia's sustainable population challenge and improve the governance and planning of cities more generally, ALGA agrees that the guiding principles for sustainable planning, decision making and investment include all of the following: adaptability, resilience, equity, innovation, integration, efficiency, place based, value for money and subsidiarity, the latter being a long held and fundamental principle of any modern democratic society.

6.0. National Assembly of Local Government 2010 Resolutions

Last year's National General Assembly of Local Government was attended by more than 600 delegates from local governments around Australia. The NGA themes were population, participation and productivity.

The 2010 NGA provided local governments from across the country with the opportunity to consider the implications of a high population growth scenario, the ageing of the population and associated issues identified by the Australian Treasury, with a view to identifying solutions that will assist councils to meet the future challenges in providing services and infrastructure at the local level. Amongst the issues addressed under the population theme were demographic changes, migration, planning, major cities and transport.

In summary the resolutions carried by the majority of voting delegates supported the need for the Australian Government to develop a population Policy based on sustainable targets and a formal process for consultation with the local government sector to develop the policy positions relating to sustainable population management.

Other resolutions reinforced local government's comprehensive appreciation of the complexity of managing population and the need to understand the policy relationships between a national population strategy, cities strategy, capital city plans, national strategic planning criteria, and Infrastructure Australia's infrastructure priorities.

With respect to regional, rural and remote Australia, local governments also highlighted the need to ensure that infrastructure and services provided to these communities are sufficient to maintain and increase population growth. They went further and also argued that the Australian Government should embrace decentralisation policies that include government departments, industry and employment incentives, tertiary education and other measures that stimulate regional Australia.

In several instances, the sector re-affirmed the pre-eminent role of local councils and communities in planning decisions and the need for the Commonwealth and states to ensure local control over planning for future population growth.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The questions of national urban and sustainable population management are two of the most important issues facing Australia today and need to be tackled in tandem with other challenges facing the nation, including climate change, regional development and a range of environmental issues such as protection of biodiversity, water, energy and food production.

Matters of urban policy are a concern of all spheres of government and all governments need to work together to address the issues facing our cities – be they of an environmental, economic, community services, transport or urban design nature. Future urban development needs to reduce its ecological impact and demonstrate best standards of infrastructure and design. Urban Australia will need new investment in infrastructure to enhance equity of access and to be globally competitive. In every respect, all governments, the private sector and broader community will need to contribute to the creation and maintenance of sustainable (social, economic and environmental) communities.

An inherent barrier to achieving sustainability outcomes for Australia is the current absence of an agreed national position on what the key sustainability objectives, milestones and evaluation indicators are for the nation. A national urban policy and sustainable population strategy will need to provide meaningful directions and measures.

ALGA agrees there is a need for a national agreement on how best to resolve the issues raised in both the Our Cities discussion paper and the Sustainable Population Strategy issues paper and that challenge will require ongoing commitment and resources by respective governments.

ALGA would also like to place on record its strong belief that any national policy and strategy must be complementary and avoid creating unnecessary duplication and be based on a collaborative network model, involving all levels of government and the private and non government sectors. Any subsequent future programs/initiatives must be designed on the basis of strong coordination, and in line with several broad, guiding principles covering adaptability, resilience, equity, innovation, integration, efficiency, place based, value for money and subsidiarity.

In conclusion, ALGA calls on the Federal Government to:

1. continue to engage local government formally in any future institutional arrangements relating to a national urban policy or sustainable population strategy;
2. ensure that in any future arrangements the three spheres of government enter into appropriate collaborative and integrated approaches; and
3. ensure future funding programs understand the fiscal restrictions of Australian local governments and also have the ability to adequately address the deficiencies in local and regional community infrastructure, because that infrastructure underpins the social, economic and environmental life of local and regional communities, and is fundamental requirement of sustainable populations.

APPENDIX 1 CONTINUUM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES IN HOUSING

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Seek proper **recognition of the existing roles of Local Government** by the Commonwealth and States
Represent local and regional communities at regional, State and national policy and program development
Seek **full involvement** in formulation of regional, State and national housing policies and programs
Seek greater clarity of Local Government's role vis a vis other spheres
Encourage greater regional **cooperation and coordination** between Councils



AWARENESS AND IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

Increasing awareness of the role of Local Government in influencing local housing conditions and opportunities, regardless of its recognition of this role.
Promotion and education of the need and opportunities for achieving adequate, appropriate and affordable housing.
Membership/support and/or encouragement of regional housing councils, housing forums, committees and groups.
Researching local housing needs.
Identifying appropriate initiatives to address local housing needs.
Advocating for resources to achieve these initiatives.



INTEGRATED PLANNING

Integrating the strategic planning process to recognise the importance of the interrelationships between housing, jobs, services, and transport, and the effect of these on access to appropriate and affordable housing.
Assessing and wherever possible **mitigating** the social impacts of development on housing.



INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION and SERVICE DELIVERY

Ensuring the availability of an adequate and timely supply of serviced land and suitable infill sites to meet existing and future housing needs.
Facilitating and carrying out the efficient, timely and adequate provision of urban infrastructure and services which provide the context for the provision of housing by others.



DEVELOPMENT CONTROL and BUILDING APPROVAL

Streamlining approval processes to facilitate the production of housing.
Reviewing development controls and building regulations to promote appropriate and affordable housing suited to local conditions.
Developing planning and regulatory mechanisms to encourage or require contribution to housing outcomes within the context of legislative constraints in each State/Territory.



FACILITATION OF HOUSING OUTCOMES

Providing, coordinating, facilitating and/or supporting housing related services and programs.
Designating an officer with responsibility for housing.
Preparing housing strategies to achieve adopted roles and objectives.
Focusing corporate goals and capital works programs to reflect the adopted housing role.
Encouraging the private sector to contribute to achieving housing objectives.
Facilitating, supporting and/or resourcing community groups to initiate housing projects.
Developing pilot or demonstration projects to encourage innovation in design and diversity of housing choice.



DIRECT PROVISION & MANAGEMENT

Entering into joint ventures to directly provide housing stock with other spheres of government, the private or

community sectors.

Residential subdivision.

Direct provision of housing stock.

Recurrent support and/or management of housing stock.

Adapted from: BBC Consulting Planners and Planning Integration Consultants 1999