

Policy statement

National Sustainable Settlement

“...we must establish new frameworks for how the different levels of government, along with businesses and the community, work together to build better cities and suburbs.”
Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister 2009

The Australian Council of Built Environment Design Professions (BEDP) is calling on the federal and state governments to develop an overarching sustainable settlement policy as a matter of national priority.

In the face of international recognition of the emerging threats posed by abrupt and irreversible damage to the climate of our planet, governments around the world are increasingly adopting aggressive mitigation portfolios in their policy approaches to:

- > current sustainability challenges relating to developments across the spectrum of metropolitan, suburban, coastal, regional and remote settlements,
- > those settlements being planned for the future generations as cities expand, and
- > those settlement areas requiring urgent retrofitting to deal with current climate change impacts.

Within Australia, significant leadership has been demonstrated across all levels of government in relation to sustainable settlement, through a wide range and scale of initiatives targeting carbon pollution reduction, energy efficiency, emissions trading, renewable energy, infrastructure and water.

The national Sustainable Settlement policy should build on such existing initiatives and provide support to them—by locating them within an integrated national framework.

The national Sustainable Settlement policy would provide:

- > An overarching and integrated strategy by which Commonwealth, State and Local Government policy initiatives can operate within a national/state framework.
- > The framework that links and integrates other urban related policies such as ‘smart cities’, urban design, sustainability charters, built environment policies and sustainable communities.
- > Guidance in the development of capital city strategic planning systems, (currently under co-ordination and review by COAG), as well as decision-making support for other COAG initiatives, including focus on national climate adaptation response and housing supply and affordability.

Settlement (not settlements)

A national policy framework on sustainable settlement would be capable of addressing sustainability challenges not only in relation to urban and suburban development, but also within the context of the broader spectrum of impacts and expressions of human settlement across the nation.

In sustainability terms, human settlement is about activity and effect, not just about towns and people. The way we extract and manage natural resources, conduct business, agriculture and tourism, protect or damage carbon sinks, live with the bush, the desert and the forests—all of these and more are characteristics of human settlement which impact across local, national and international scales.

At the most fundamental level, a national policy on Sustainable Settlement should be designed to accommodate the complex interactions, complementarities and conflicts which occur between individual sustainability parameters (such as energy, water, population growth, transport, infrastructure, climate, natural resources etc.), and their subsequent impact on the patterns and effects of human settlement at local, regional and national scales—and to enable rigorous analysis and optimization of necessary ‘tradeoffs’ in decision-making to support broader national sustainability goals.

The National Sustainable Settlement policy directions should leverage and build on existing policy development and delivery mechanisms—e.g. collaborative, co-operative and integrated strategies between local, state and federal governments such as COAG, within a strong community and stakeholder consultation process.

Seeking integrated design solutions for national Sustainable Settlement

The BEDP strongly urge the Australia’s federal and State governments to act rapidly through COAG to provide a central, integrated vision for a sustainable future and to implement a national Sustainable Settlement policy that will guide a consistency of approach in all settlement development across the nation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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