NSROC Liveability Conference 2019:

High-Level Overview Report

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Executive Summary

The intent of this report is to provide a high-level overview of the NSROC Conference held on 7 February 2019 in Chatswood NSW, where the major themes and issues from the Conference further reflect and support the key Points of the NSROC 10-Point Plan.

Over 90 councillors, mayors and senior staff from the Northern Sydney councils heard from experts and government representatives at the Conference on liveability and the role of arts and cultural infrastructure, sports and open spaces, smart and responsive planning (including transport and affordable housing).

The Premier was the closing speaker and the NSW Minister for Planning and Housing was a keynote speaker.

Presentations are available on the NSROC website:
http://www.nsroc.com.au/about/conferences

The Premier, relevant Ministers and the NSW Leader of the Opposition and relevant Shadow Ministers will receive this Conference overview report calling for their support, following from the previous correspondence sent with regard to the NSROC 10-Point Plan.

Consistent with the NSROC 10-Point Plan – Proposed actions for NSW Government

The role of arts and cultural infrastructure and liveability:

As reflected in the NSROC 10-Point Plan, in partnership and collaboration between local councils and NSW Government, liveability is enhanced with the timely delivery of appropriate arts and cultural infrastructure that maximised participation opportunities, community well-being and amenity benefits.

This requires social and cultural infrastructure to be well-funded to meet the anticipated growth and needs of the NSROC region in order to maintain and enhance the quality of life for the residents.

In line with Point 3 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan, NSROC urges NSW Government to consider a metropolitan cultural funding equivalent to the NSW Government's $100 M Regional Cultural Funding.

In particular, Point 3.8 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan proposes NSW Government to enhance arts and cultural funding for the Northern Sydney region with a regional funding approach for metropolitan councils and give recognition to this region as a distinct statistical region for arts and culture funding processes (rather than grouping the Northern Sydney region collectively with Eastern Sydney and Sydney CBD).

Maintaining and protecting recreational and open spaces and promoting healthy lifestyles:

In particular Point 3.7 of the 10-Point Plan, NSROC urges NSW Government to develop a state government policy or guidelines to promote the preservation of Zone RE1 Public Recreation and Zone RE2 Private Recreation, in order to provide a range of recreational settings and compatible land uses while protecting and enhancing the natural environment for recreational purposes.

NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) to work more closely with local councils to prevent the loss of tree canopy on RMS roads, and to consider tree planting in the Road Design Guidelines.

Smart, responsive planning and development for sustainability and liveability:

In line with Point 5 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan, NSW Government in partnership with local councils of the Northern Sydney region, should ensure the type and quality of development reflects the community's aspirations for the region while remaining consistent with the objectives of the North District Plan.

In particular, NSROC urges the NSW Government to support the following from the 10-Point Plan:

Point 5.1.1 Apply more scrutiny when determining the competence of applicants seeking various categories of accreditation under the accreditation scheme adopted under the *Building Professionals Act 2005*.

Point 5.1.2 Deal more stringently with incompetent private accredited certifiers who assess, approve and certify development that does not comply with planning instruments and development regulations.

Point 5.1.3 Establish a process to ensure that a principal certifying authority (PCA) is approved independently of the builder.

Point 5.1.4 Remove the self-selection of the private certifier.

Point 5.3 Amend the planning rules to exempt Councils impacted by overdevelopment and who are providing forms of medium density housing already accepted by their communities under local planning controls.

Point 5.4 Ensure that the cumulative impacts of the Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code with multiple code-based approvals/assessed dwellings are to be identified, prevented and continually monitored to ensure they remain low-impact.

Point 5.6 Give due weight and consideration to the evidence and decisions of councils with regard to planning proposals that are not supported by councils and their community.

Support Point 1 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan by:

•   Giving councils more flexibility in the rating system, such as providing councils with flexibility to set different residential rates within their local area; in particular, for strata titled medium/high density properties. Alternatively enable a shift towards a dual system, with Capital Improved Value (CIV) and the current Land Value. CIV should not be mandated.

> • Giving councils the option to use either CIV or UV (unimproved land value) would be consistent with stakeholders' preferences in the IPART review.
>
> Support Point 2 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan by:
> • Implementing the rate pegging options from the Independent Local Government Review Panel's report, Revitalising Local Government (October 2013) including the streamlined rate pegging option to allow councils to increase rates by up to 5% per annum above the rate pegging limit over the life of a Delivery Program, provided certain conditions were satisfied. IPART would still review and determine applications for SVs (Special Variations) of more than 5% per annum above the rate peg.

High-Level Overview

Theme 1: The role of arts and cultural infrastructure and liveability

This is consistent with Point 3 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan - Liveability with Appropriate Social Infrastructure: To enhance the liveability of the NSROC region by fostering healthy, creative, culturally rich and socially connected communities, through the provision of appropriate social and cultural infrastructure.

At the NSROC Conference, Create NSW referred to its *Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025*, which was recently launched on 6 February 2019 and aimed to create a pathway for partnerships. The *Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025* seeks to create a creativity boom with arts and culture at the core. Art in public spaces could make public art thrive, where art creates the urban fabric of the place and generates the precinct's economic survival.

Create NSW could provide a NSW map or list of priortities/opportunities for infrastructure that could be displayed at the level of LGAs.

Key Comments and Issues

Concerns were raised that the Northern Sydney region does not receive arts and cultural funding in proportion to its population size; and there is no metropolitan cultural funding equivalent to the NSW Government's $100 M Regional Cultural Funding.

Theme 2: Maintaining and protecting recreational and open spaces and promoting healthy lifestyles

Point 3 of NSROC 10-Point Plan also recognised the importance of recreational and open spaces.

NSROC Conference discussed addressing active lifestyles for all ages. Current funding issue was raised. For example, there was only one grant for gymnastics but it is one of the top 3 sports for girls.

Local clubs could develop recreational and sport facilities, so it is not just the role for councils.

The Conference referred to maximising the use of available facilities such as with lighting. In order to address residents who object to extra lighting, the conversation could be shifted to being about part of the community that brings health benefits. An ageing population needs fitness to reduce the costs of health care. When Sydney's population reaches 6.5 million, children will not have the same access to playing fields but will still need to be active.

NSW Government sees open space and green space as priorities. The Premier already announced $100 M for open space grants, 5 Million Trees and Everyone Can Play project.

Playgrounds are important as they can lead to the sense of connectedness and that of belonging in a community. There are 440 playgrounds already in the NSROC region. Open spaces can be inclusive for all ages and abilities.

NSW Government is aiming to increase tree canopies. This requires collaboration with local councils for 5 million trees to be planted. The NSW Department of Planning's Open Space Office has a count on its website for 5 million trees to be planted. (Although, note the North Sydney region does not qualify for the 5 million trees project).

Research and evidence is important. The Department is conducting studies on what is needed to build on the Green Grid with a combination of infrastructure. A mapping of tree canopy with baseline and priority need areas is being developed.

Community is demanding liveability. To do this, we need to do it early and embed it earlier in the planning.

Key Comments and Issues

Concerns were raised with regard to the loss of canopy on Roads and Maritime Servies (RMS) roads and the 10:50 rule. Comment was made to reinforce tree planting in the Road Design Guidelines.

Comment was made with regard to having a Minister for Open Spaces, and to make retaining open spaces as a priority. Residents in high rise may exercise more than those in the lower density suburbs since additional facilities are built to service them and amenities are more reachable by walking. Exercise is hard for the elderly. There are benefits shown to help motivate the elderly to stay active. Swimming requires expensive infrastructure such as pools to be built and maintained. Better planning could help to address these issues.

Question was asked if the Office of Sport or NSW Government could consider establishing a centralised resource base on existing infrastructure so councils know when facilities like a bowling club or golf club comes on market, which could be converted to open space, sporting fields or recreational parks.

Theme 3: Smart, responsive planning and development for sustainability and liveability

This is consistent with Point 5 of the NSROC 10-Point Plan which addressed the importance of responsive planning and development in the Northern Sydney region.

NSROC Conference discussed the role of the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) in looking at how a metropolis works and its governance.

The narrative of GSC on the 3 cities creates vision, and leads to urban and town planning and helps deliver prosperous, inclusive cities, but it needs other guidance though transport, affordability and development, coordinated across 3 levels of government.

GSC was discussed conceptually to be a model that could be like a quasi-council or a metro government like the Greater London Authority, which allows decisions on city shaping

investment. The need of an independent revenue stream eg part of value capture was raised. Under such a theoretical model, there must be a partnership between state and local government, such as the ROCs elect 1 representative each, and state government has a representative. The metro government could theoretically be accountable to both a combination of state and local government through its elected members.

A key focus of GSC is liveability, which could be approached in 2 ways. First, understanding the city. Second, determining what could be done locally. Solutions in local places could address larger issues such as creating low carbon, high performance precincts at a local scale. Local government has a key role to play in the delivery of regional strategy.

The Conference also referred to how smart precincts are resilient and responsive. Survey has shown what is important: affordability, agility, amenity, safety, spaces, and opportunity. Success factors include a geographic area where institutions cluster (start ups, innovators and accelerators), where people come together, live and create. Dialogue could shift from high density to high quality and high productivity.

Social and affordable housing was also considered as critical infrastructure, including building equity into a growing city. Increased density affects housing markets, affordability and increases pressure on those with low income.

Recent trend showed low density living areas are becoming areas where high care is needed but not readily supported. Ageing communities want services that are better suited to higher density.

Urban design, density, movement and streetscape could also lead to healthier outcomes such as commuters walking between transport mode and destination, which could address obesity, depression, sense of community and active lifestyle.

Factors that could make a precinct resilient such as Macquarie Park, include: good collaboration across different levels of government, proximity to public transport, infrastructure investment and long term planning.

The Conference also looked at the history of public transport investment, where roads and motorways have increased but train stations have been removed over the decades. Between the 1850s and 1940s, Sydney built 205 railway stations and also had trams and buses serving an area of 800 km2 and a population of 1.7 M. Despite a growing population, over the next 80 years, infrastructure reduced with 44 stations removed. However, roads increased dramatically. To date, another 15 stations have been built but Sydney is now an area of 2,500 km2 and a population of 4.5 M. With the proposed Metros by 2030, the city will be an area of 3,000 km2 and a population of 6.25 M, but with only a 5% increase in the number of stations compared to pre-war period. The challenge is how to do public transport investment and how to fund it. It was raised that rail tunnels be constructed before road tunnels.

At the Conference, planning was described as being about merit and placed based solutions, and understanding local character. Local councils have an important role in Local Environmental Plans (LEP) and Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS) which reflects the LGA's future direction.

Key Comments and Issues

Concerns were expressed about Mr Michael Daley's press release and statement on housing targets on the North Shore.

If elected, Labor will invite all Mayors to a meeting to look at reducing cost shifting such as the maintenance of local and regional roads, as well as establish a road reclassification review and take advice from local councils about the status of roads in their LGAs. Roads that have become regional roads should be maintained by the State Government.

Questions were raised about rate capping and limitations on rate increases which prevents councils from being resourced to meet the challenges of increased density. Labor will be happy to review rate capping.

NSW Government has dual responsibilities to ensure councils have adequate resources while protecting the community from unnecessary increased rates. IPART has a role in determining appropriate rates. NSW Government is looking for downward pressures on rates as local government becomes more efficient.

Clarity was sought on when an announcement would be made on the options to improve the private certification system. Concerns were expressed with regard to private certifiers as well as complying development with no council oversight.

Private certification was brought in by the previous government, NSW Government has introduced greater controls on private certifiers. Partnership between State and Local Government will ensure more controls to come. NSW Government can provide funding. Medium density is more appropriate than high rise in some locations, councils can control through their LEPs, and tell government where medium density should be built. The Lambert Review has proposed reforms. The Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation is representing the government on these issues at the COAG meeting and will push for more openness and transparency.

In relation to why affordable housing was not covered in the LEP reform, comment was that SEPP 70 is open to any council.

Question was made on how a fare structure could cover the cost of public transport as roads are paid for by tolls, and a comment that funding be made through government borrowings as we need new ways of funding and valuing the contribution.

With regard to whether smaller hubs need an anchor institution, the comment was that smaller centres can be successful such as Bendigo in Victoria is based around 3 government agencies or the example of Geelong in Victoria, where the market produced its own hub based around insurance firms. In relation to how easy would it be to adapt to precincts in the current planning system, there was a comment on committing to a strategic intent and working through the detail while retaining flexibility into the future.

BASIX has the capacity to be leveraged up to provide better outcomes but the tendency is to leverage it down. LEP Health Checks have shown that changes are sought to BASIX so the GSC is aware of this issue. Recommendation 80 of the State Infrastructure Strategy calls for a review of energy efficiency standards. The LSPS (Local Strategic Planning Statements) allows an opportunity to raise this issue.

If resourcing or timing of LEPs reviews or LSPS is an issue for councils, the Minister for Planning is willing to listen and if possible, to assist.

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