Submission on the Greater Sydney Commission’s Draft Greater Sydney Region Plan

prepared by

EDO NSW
December 2017
About EDO NSW

EDO NSW is a community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law. We help people who want to protect the environment through law. Our reputation is built on:

**Successful environmental outcomes using the law.** With over 30 years’ experience in environmental law, EDO NSW has a proven track record in achieving positive environmental outcomes for the community.

**Broad environmental expertise.** EDO NSW is the acknowledged expert when it comes to the law and how it applies to the environment. We help the community to solve environmental issues by providing legal and scientific advice, community legal education and proposals for better laws.

**Independent and accessible services.** As a non-government and not-for-profit legal centre, our services are provided without fear or favour. Anyone can contact us to get free initial legal advice about an environmental problem, with many of our services targeted at rural and regional communities.

EDO NSW is part of a national network of centres that help to protect the environment through law in their states.

Submitted to:

Greater Sydney Commission
Draft Greater Sydney Region Plan
PO Box 257
Parramatta NSW 2124
By email: submissions@gsc.nsw.gov.au

For further information on this submission, please contact:

Mr Nari Sahukar
Senior Policy & Law Reform Solicitor
EDO NSW
T: 02 9262 6989
E: nari.sahukar[at]edonsw.org.au

Ms Rachel Walmsley
Policy & Law Reform Director
EDO NSW
T: 02 9262 6989
E: rachel.walmsley[at]edonsw.org.au

EDO NSW
ABN 72 002 880 864
Level 5, 263 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA
E: edonsw@edonsw.org.au
W: www.edonsw.org.au
T: + 61 2 9262 6989
F: + 61 2 9264 2412
Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Greater Sydney Commission’s Draft Greater Sydney Region Plan (October 2017) (draft Plan), and for the briefings provided to EDO NSW and other environmental stakeholder groups before and after the release of the draft Plan for exhibition.

EDO NSW has engaged with the Department of Planning and the Greater Sydney Commission (the Commission) in each stage of public consultation on Sydney metropolitan strategic planning in recent years. In March 2017 EDO NSW made a comprehensive submission on Towards Our Greater Sydney, the precursor to the draft Plan, with a range of recommendations and principles.¹

We are pleased to see some progress and alignment with our previous comments in the draft Plan – including a wider focus on social and environmental outcomes, climate change readiness and emissions reduction. Our March 2017 comments do remain relevant, particularly the need for clearer integration between economic, social and environmental actions and targets, and for further environmental metrics.

Part A of this submission makes some overarching comments on key issues. Namely:

1. Linking economic and environmental outcomes to promote and embed ESD
2. Ten Directions - Delivering, monitoring and reporting of metrics and outcomes
3. Resolving conflicting priorities and objectives
4. Clearer, more effective interaction with State Environmental Planning Policies
5. Biodiversity and heritage protection
6. Green infrastructure - welcome recognition, but a need to embed in controls
7. Reducing emissions to avoid dangerous climate change
8. Western Sydney Airport and other economic objectives must embed sustainability
9. Waste reduction - emphasis needed to collaborate, plan and avoid waste
10. Language of the draft Plan and public engagement.

Part B of this submission reviews and briefly comments on specific objectives, strategies and actions outlined in the Draft Plan. Namely:

Objectives (1-5) - ‘A city supported by infrastructure’ and ‘A collaborative city’.
Objectives (6-9) - ‘A city for people’.
Objectives (10-11) - ‘Housing the city’.
Objectives (12-13 and 16-17) - ‘A city of great places’.
Objectives (14-15) - ‘A well-connected city’
Objectives (18-24) - ‘Jobs and skills for the city’
Objectives (25-32) - A city in its landscape
Objectives (33-35) - An efficient city
Objectives (36-38) - A resilient city
Objectives (39-40) - Implementation.

Part A - Overarching comments and some key issues

1. Linking economic and environmental outcomes to promote and embed ESD

Many of the recommendations in this submission identify where objectives need to link more closely to one another to ensure ecologically sustainable development (ESD). This is important and consistent with the aims of the planning legislation and the Greater Sydney Commission itself.

We welcome the draft Plan’s bolstered social and environmental objectives. Beyond this, we strongly recommend embedding references and actions for ecological sustainability within the economic and infrastructure objectives in the final Region Plan.

To avoid doubt and reduce conflict and inefficiency in delivery, the Plan needs to emphasise that the type of growth and economic development that will make Sydney more productive, healthy, liveable and sustainable is a low-waste, zero-emissions, innovative economy that plans to conserve and restore its unique landscapes and biodiversity. To do this, economic objectives must explicitly ‘speak to’ and integrate with other aims and actions.

2. Ten Directions - Delivering, monitoring and reporting of metrics and outcomes

The 10 high-level directions to deliver infrastructure, liveability productivity and sustainability provide a generally sound vision for the future of Sydney in coming decades. However, there remains a risk that generalised environmental objectives will be eclipsed by specific economic development objectives and targets.

Monitoring and reporting has been a major flaw in the last two Sydney metropolitan plans. In our view, the number and quality of environmental metrics in the 2017 draft Plan still do not reflect the number and quality of environmental objectives.

We recommend the final Plan include further, more ambitious environmental targets and measures to underpin the three Sustainability themes: landscape, efficiency and resilience. This should include a set of SMART indicators (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely), both qualitative and quantitative, that make the environment more visible in decision-making and aim to achieve ESD. Please refer to Objectives 39-40 below and to Part 4 of the Environmental Panel Advisory Paper.

We also recommend the Commission closely considers the recommendations of the collaborative research report, Creating Liveable Cities in Australia (Oct. 2017), and

---

2 NB: The RMIT research below found that cities with less ambitious ‘liveability’ targets were more likely to achieve the targets, but performed worse on the standard liveability metrics than other cities.
embeds best-practice monitoring and reporting in the Sydney Region Plan. Whether targets are achieved or not, this is a vital element of public confidence in the Plan.

3. Resolving conflicting priorities and objectives

As noted in our submission on Towards our Greater Sydney, a key test for the Sydney Region Plan will be how potential conflicts between objectives, priorities and actions are resolved. For example, when housing targets or school expansions in an area present tensions for the conservation of bushland valued by the community for open space and biodiversity.

We recommend the Region Plan recognise the potential for conflict and elaborate on what processes will be used to resolve these conflicts – in ways that are transparent, consultative and responsive to community voices. Again this is an opportunity to ensure the principles of ESD are actively used in the decision-making framework, so that conflict resolution reaches the best outcomes for long-term community and environmental interests.

4. Clearer, more effective interaction with State Environmental Planning Policies

Once finalised, the Sydney Region Plan will be a statutory plan that planning authorities will be required to implement via District Plans and Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), including ‘planning proposals’ for new and revised plans and zones. The relationship with State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) is less clear.

Unless SEPPs are reviewed to better deliver on social and environmental objectives, there is a clear risk to delivering on these objectives in the draft Sydney Region Plan. This is because SEPPs can and do override subordinate instruments like LEPs. For example, Objective 30 to increase urban tree canopy will be undermined unless a variety of SEPPs – such as for infrastructure, education, priority precincts, major projects, complying development, greenfield development (draft code) – are amended to build-in the urban tree canopy objective.

We strongly recommend the Commission and the Department of Planning and Environment review SEPPs to better deliver on social and environmental objectives outlined in the Sydney Region Plan.

5. Biodiversity and heritage protection

We strongly support the draft Plan’s high-level objectives to protect biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage. We also support the draft Plan’s recognition of past damage from unsustainable land use in Greater Sydney, and a proactive approach to conservation and restoration.4

The key challenge here is to translate these general objectives into systemic decision-making and practical outcomes, both in district and local environmental

---

4 See the draft Greater Sydney Region Plan, Objectives 25-32 (‘A city in its landscape’).
plans. We support initiatives to maximise access to open space, such as innovative use of public/private lands like schools and golf courses.

We recommend this challenge can be further addressed by:

- better linkages between environmental and economic objectives,
- upfront community engagement in innovative ways,
- early collaboration across sectors,
- transparent conflict resolution processes that embed ESD principles, and
- giving effect to environmental principles and concepts like the Green Grid, not just in high-level regional plans, but in State and local planning controls.

6. **Green infrastructure - welcome recognition, but a need to embed in controls**

We strongly support the draft Plan’s shift to emphasise ‘green infrastructure’ in the NSW planning system. As our submissions pointed out at the time, green infrastructure was completely absent from the 2013 attempt at planning reforms. We continue to recommend that green infrastructure, the Green Grid and related concepts must be given clearer effect and priority in State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) and systematically embedded in other planning instruments.5

7. **Reducing emissions to avoid dangerous climate change**

We strongly support the Commission build climate change mitigation and adaptation into the draft Plan, and explicit linkages to the NSW Government’s aim of net-zero emissions by 2050 (see draft Objective 33). This is a positive evolution from past Plans. We also welcome the research on *Exploring Net Zero Emissions for Greater Sydney*.6 These initial steps are vital to activate public discussion and practical shifts to a positive, carbon-constrained future. The final Plan must take these steps further.

We strongly recommend the Plan include explicit emissions reduction targets and metrics (or at a minimum, a mandatory process for target setting and measurement), with further implementation in district and local plans. We also refer to our set of 14 more comprehensive recommendations on planning for emissions reduction in 2016.7 The net-zero emissions target falls squarely within the time horizon of the Region Plan (to 2056). This makes these recommendations all the more important.

8. **Western Sydney Airport and other economic objectives must embed sustainability**

We are concerned that the draft Plan’s economic objectives, strategies and actions – including for Western Sydney Airport and surrounds – emphasise development, but

---

5 We also note that a draft NSW Green Infrastructure Policy is on exhibition until 26 February 2018. We have not yet reviewed that policy at the time of writing this submission, and so are unable to comment on potential linkages between them. See further, NSW Government Architect, *Green Places* (2017), at http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=8933.


fail to explicitly interlink with ecological sustainability outcomes. Lack of explicit links creates a risk that the objectives will be misinterpreted, or pull in opposite directions.

We strongly recommend the final Plan seize the opportunity to build strategies, actions and collaborative measures for ‘sustainability’ into general economic objectives (e.g. 24), infrastructure and logistics objectives (e.g. 16) and any development of the Airport and servicing areas around Badgerys Creek (Objective 20). This recommendation is consistent with the aims of the planning law and the GSC itself to promote ESD; the NSW net-zero emissions target; and early proposals for a Western Sydney Strategic Sustainability Plan to protect biodiversity.

9. Waste reduction - emphasis needed to collaborate, plan and avoid waste

We are concerned that although the draft Plan deals with waste recovery and recycling, there is little focus on avoiding waste creation in the first place, such as through packaging innovation, circular economy design processes, and planning controls that, for example, could create low-waste takeaway food precincts. As one opportunity, we recommend that Strategy 22.3 (on engaging the retail sector on planning controls) include a reference to reducing packaging and waste generation.

In turn we recommend industry engagement objectives be linked to the ‘Efficient city’ objectives and actions in the draft Plan (see Objective 35).

10. Language of the draft Plan and public engagement

The draft Plan includes new, existing or important emerging concepts that may be familiar to the planning profession or government agencies but are not familiar to Sydney residents. Such terms include Collaboration Areas, place-based planning, precincts, City Deals, urban services land, green infrastructure and the circular economy. Statements such as ‘a green infrastructure approach’ must also be clarified. While we welcome many of these concepts – some of which are necessarily new to public discussion – they must be made clearer and penetrable for the general community to engage, reflect and provide effective feedback and input.\(^8\)

We recommend an upfront glossary, or better still, an introductory section that clearly and briefly explains key terms (cross-referencing to where more detail can be found). The Commission could also consider renaming certain concepts with clearer labels, or rephrasing and clarifying sections (and actions) that may read like jargon.

---

\(^8\) See for example:
- Action 8: Collaborate to deliver the Western Sydney City Deal.
- Action 9: Facilitate whole-of-government place-based outcomes through Collaboration Areas for targeted strategic centres including Liverpool, Greater Penrith and Randwick.
Part B - Comments on specific objectives and actions in the draft Sydney Region Plan

This part of our submission reviews and briefly comments on specific objectives, strategies and actions outlined in the Draft Greater Sydney Region Plan.

Objectives (1-5) - ‘A city supported by infrastructure’ and ‘A collaborative city’.

These objectives should link more clearly to the ‘efficient city’ objectives, to ensure infrastructure is ecologically sustainable and climate-ready. (For example, building-in capacity for electric vehicles, charging stations and renewables integration.)

Objectives (6-9) - ‘A city for people’.

In general we welcome references to optimising the use of available public land for social infrastructure. However this is an example where the proposed Sydney Plan says one thing while the Government’s legislative agenda does another. In particular, recent amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (Planning Act) removed two long-standing objects of the Act that promote the use and management of public land for community services and facilities.

Objectives (10-11) - ‘Housing the city’.

We note Actions 2 and 3, to prepare housing strategies and 6-10 year housing targets. These actions are likely to have a very significant impact on the future shape of the city, and both the likelihood and means of achieving other objectives and actions for social and environmental outcomes (including affordable housing targets under Action 4). We recommend clear and specific consultation plans, processes and resources are needed to engage local communities about these actions. It is not sufficient to consult only at such a high level as the Draft Region Plan.

Objectives (12-13 and 16-17) - ‘A city of great places’.

As noted for Objectives (6-9) above, we support ‘prioritising people-friendly public realm and open space as a central organising design principle’, including high amenity and walkability. We recommend references to ‘place-based and collaborative… planning, design, development and management’ (place-based planning) need to be much more clearly explained and articulated if it is to be a centrepiece of planning for Sydney.  

We also recommend clarifying how place-based planning approaches will be given legal effect in SEPPs which will drive an increasing amount of development in Greater Sydney and NSW. This should include, but not be limited to, ‘precinct’-based SEPPs. We also recommend clarifying how place-based planning approaches will integrate the objects of the Act, including principles of ESD, in decision-making.

---

9 See also Action 9 - ‘Facilitate whole-of-government place-based outcomes through Collaboration Areas for targeted strategic centres including Liverpool, Greater Penrith and Randwick’.

10 Such as the State Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005.
We welcome the Objective 13 to conserve and enhance environmental heritage. Improved conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage requires prioritising the development of new legislation. Drafts of this law have been delayed beyond 2017.\footnote{See NSW Office of Environment and Heritage: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/achreform/}

On Objective 16, we recommend the proposal that ‘Freight and logistics network is competitive and efficient’ needs to add the term ‘sustainable’ – in its title, its strategies and implementation. Draft strategies and actions do recognise air pollution and noise impacts (by way of buffer zones). However, to avoid intense land-use conflicts we recommend expressly referring to limits where ‘24-hour port and freight functions’ may not be appropriate (Draft Action 16.1).

We strongly recommend Objectives 16 and 17 be amended to include greater linkage to climate change readiness and mitigation. This should include specific collaborative measures to move towards net-zero emissions logistics (including but not limited to electric car uptake and rail freight). This would align strongly with the concept of a ‘green’ Western Parkland City, and with the NSW Government’s positive aim of net-zero emissions by 2050.

The recognised need to improve air quality in Western Sydney – particularly if it is to accommodate a new airport, logistics hub and employment areas – increases the need to link infrastructure objectives to pollution and public health outcomes. Objectives 16 and 17, and employment objectives in the Plan, should link to specific new air pollution objectives, strategies and targets (which we recommend below).

**Objectives (14-15) - ‘A well-connected city’**

We recommend that Draft Action 14.2, ‘Investigate, plan and protect future transport and infrastructure corridors’ be amended to refer to being integrated with other social, environmental and economic objectives, strategies and actions in this Plan.

We also recommend explicit reference to the need for early, ongoing engagement with local communities about infrastructure projects here, given the major social disruption and environmental impacts that State Significant Infrastructure can cause.

Although we recognise and welcome integration between the Commission’s draft Sydney Region Plan and Transport for NSW’s *Future Transport 2056* draft strategy, many community groups will not have capacity to comment on both at once, during a busy end-of-year period. Early and responsive community engagement is essential.

**Objectives (18-24) – ‘Jobs and skills for the city’**

We welcome and support investments in walkability and cycling as a part of more productive cities across Greater Sydney (for example 18.1, 19.1, 20.1).

We are concerned that ‘economic’ objectives, strategies and actions related to the Western Sydney Airport (Objective 20) and other economic sectors (Objective 24) are missing an opportunity to build-in ‘sustainability’ – that is, ensuring pathways for
economic development and productivity are ecologically sustainable. This is the essence of encouraging ESD – an object or aim of the NSW Planning Act where this Plan sits, and a statutory consideration for the Commission itself.\textsuperscript{12}

Under NSW laws, ESD is to be achieved by, among other things, ‘improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms – namely, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services…’\textsuperscript{13} Internationally, this is often expressed as a shift towards ‘green growth’ or the ‘green economy’.\textsuperscript{14}

We strongly recommend that the Commission review Objectives 18 to 24 – and all objectives, strategies and actions in the draft Plan related to the Western Sydney Airport and the Badgerys Creek ‘Aerotropolis’ (suburbs and services around the future airport) – to embed a form of economic development that reflects ‘improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms’ and a ‘green economy’ model.\textsuperscript{15}

As part of these amendments, we also strongly recommend Objective 20 and its strategies for Western Sydney Airport explicitly link to net-zero emissions targets and biodiversity protection for the Cumberland Plain.

Action 8 is to ‘Collaborate to deliver Western Sydney City Deal’ but there is nothing specific about the level of focus this ‘City Deal’ will place on ecological sustainability.

As above, we recommend Objective 22 (Investment and business activity in centres) link to transport efficiency and net-zero emissions targets, particularly in the action on ‘balancing the efficient movement of people and goods with supporting the liveability of places on the road network’ (emphasis added). Also, if ‘liveability’ refers to clean air and protections from night-time noise, this could be explicitly stated.

We would support the investigation of novel ways to resolve these potential conflicts, for example, Protection of the Environment Policies under NSW pollution laws.\textsuperscript{16} This would be consistent with the GSC’s legislative objective to ‘support ongoing improvement in liveability, productivity and environmental quality’ (GSC Act s. 9(f)).

We recommend that Strategy 22.2 to ‘Create new centres in accordance with the stated principles in the draft Plan’ make clear which ‘stated principles’ this refers to.

\textsuperscript{12} See Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) (Planning Act), s. 5; Greater Sydney Commission Act 2015 (NSW) (GSC Act), s. 9; and the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 (NSW), s. 6(2)(d), which sets out the core principles of ESD for those Acts.\textsuperscript{13} …such as:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(i)] polluter pays—that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement,
  \item[(ii)] the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste,
  \item[(iii)] environmental goals, having been established, should be pursued in the most cost effective way… (See Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991, s. 6(2)(d).)
\end{itemize}


\textsuperscript{15} The Commission could also refer to terms already used in the draft Plan, such as ‘circular economy’ (Objectives 34-35, ‘An efficient city’) although that is a narrower term to do with re-use and efficiency.

\textsuperscript{16} See Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, Chap. 2, which has not been used to date.
As noted in Part A, we are concerned that although the draft Plan deals with waste recovery and recycling, there is little focus on avoiding waste creation in the first place – such as through packaging innovation, circular economy design processes; and planning controls that, for example, could create low-waste or plastic-free takeaway food precincts.

As one opportunity to embed waste avoidance, we recommend that action 22.3 (on engaging the retail sector on planning controls) include a reference to plans, collaboration and controls on packaging and waste generation. Similar actions could link to the EPA’s building waste reduction targets and initiatives. In turn, we recommend industry engagement objectives be linked to the ‘Efficient city’ objectives and actions in the draft Plan (such as in Objective 35).

**Objectives (25-32) - A city in its landscape**

As noted in Part A, we support the draft Plan’s high-level objectives to protect biodiversity and natural and cultural heritage, as well as the draft’s recognition of past damage from unsustainable land use in Greater Sydney, and a proactive approach to conservation and restoration. We also strongly support the draft Plan’s shift to emphasise green infrastructure in the NSW planning system.

The key challenge here is to translate these general objectives into systemic decision-making and practical outcomes, including in district and local environmental plans (and SEPPs as noted elsewhere).

We recommend addressing this by updating Sustainability objectives to ensure:

- better linkages between environmental and economic objectives,
- upfront community engagement in innovative ways,
- early collaboration across sectors,
- transparent conflict resolution processes that embed ESD principles, and
- giving effect to environmental principles and concepts like the Green Grid in State and local planning controls, such as SEPPs, District Plans and LEPs.

Below we make some more specific comments in the order of the draft objectives.

Strategy 25.1 should clarify what is meant by ‘environmentally sensitive’ coastal areas and waterways. Firstly this is important so that communities, local councils and other planning authorities understand the scope of Objective 25. Secondly the use of these terms should be clarified as ‘environmentally sensitive areas’ (ESAs) are defined terms in certain planning instruments.

As part of Objective 26, for ‘a cool and green parkland city’, Action 11 of the draft Plan is to implement the South Creek Corridor Plan. Strategy 26.1 says this will be implemented...

---

17 See Objectives 34-35 for existing references in the draft Plan: ‘A circular economy reframes the traditional way of using resources so energy, water and waste are used efficiently and continually recycled and re-used.’

18 See the draft Greater Sydney Region Plan, Objectives 25-32 ‘A city in its landscape’.

19 Such as the 2008 Exempt and Complying Development Codes SEPP and the 2007 Mining SEPP. These concepts will need to be interpreted in light of the forthcoming Coastal SEPP.
done using ‘the design principles for South Creek’. Yet none the four principles refer to biodiversity (see Figure 47). We strongly recommend that any design principles for South Creek include specific measures to conserve, maintain or enhance biodiversity values, starting with avoidance and minimisation of biodiversity impacts.

We strongly support recognising and managing urban bushland and remnant vegetation as important and valued infrastructure (for example, Strategy 27.1).

Also under Objective 27 (and elsewhere) the final Plan should be more clear and directive in requiring Councils to incorporate urban bushland in new neighbourhoods. Saying that bushland and remnant vegetation ‘should be considered’ is inadequate.20

We welcome Objectives 28 and 29 to protect scenic, cultural and metropolitan rural landscapes. We recommend this does not exclude consideration of renewable energy projects that promote ESD, supported by community consultation and evidence-based assessment.

We support Strategy 30.1 is to expand urban tree canopy in the public realm. This should be expanded to include public infrastructure such as schools. We also recommend a further strategy to monitor and increase urban canopy on private land.

We support Objective 31 (Public open space is accessible, protected and enhanced). Unfortunately, recent legislative amendments will remove important objectives from the Planning Act that support land for public purposes and facilities.

While we agree that open space needs to be assessed across multiple values, the definitions of quantity, quality and distribution make no mention of biodiversity or habitat suitability for native plants and animals (see Figure 52). We recommend ‘key considerations’ include biodiversity and native habitat. This is very important given potential competing development pressures, such as sporting fields.

Objective 32 promotes a ‘Green Grid’ to link parks, bushland, walking and cycle paths across Greater Sydney. Delivering the Green Grid was a consistent theme of submissions to Towards our Greater Sydney 2056, District Plans and in roundtable discussions of the Commission’s Environmental Advisory Panel.21

We recommend and reiterate that green infrastructure, the Green Grid and related concepts must be given clearer effect and priority in the planning system. This should include additional, more specific actions for the Green Grid beyond strategy 32.1. Additional strategies could include, for example:

---

20 See p 135: ‘urban bushland including degraded or remnant vegetation should be considered for incorporation into the planning and design of new neighbourhoods, and where possible be maintained on public land as part of the Greater Sydney Green Grid…’

• Consultation or concurrence requirements involving the Commission or another planning authority where Green Grid corridors are proposed to be developed for other uses.\textsuperscript{22}
• Consideration of ‘value capture’ models, whereby the cost of a long-term Green Grid plan is levied on rezoning and development in Greater Sydney.
• Systematically embedding consideration of the Green Grid in State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) and other planning instruments.\textsuperscript{23}

We also note that a draft NSW Green Infrastructure Policy is on exhibition until 26 Feb. 2018.\textsuperscript{24} As noted we have not reviewed that Policy yet, but hope it provides new opportunities to embed green infrastructure in planning instruments and decisions.

**Objectives (33-35) - An efficient city**

We strongly support objectives for climate change mitigation (emissions reduction) and adaptation, as well as explicit linkages to the NSW Government’s aim of net-zero emissions by 2050 (objective 33). We strongly recommend these be strengthened in the Final Plan. We also welcome the research on *Exploring Net Zero Emissions for Greater Sydney.*\textsuperscript{25} Research, public discussion, practical pathways and policies to achieve the target are well overdue.

Objective 33 of the draft Plan is to ‘contribute to’ achieving net-zero emissions and mitigate climate change as a low-carbon city (see p 147). This is not specific or measurable enough to aim for, achieve or evaluate success (by contrast, see the draft Plan’s methodical approach to setting housing targets, delivery strategies and metrics). Strategy 33.1 is to ‘support initiatives’ to establish low-carbon precincts, and the metric for reporting is the number of precincts established.

We recommend the final Plan include more explicit targets and metrics, with further implementation in district and local plans. At a minimum, there needs to be a mandatory process for target setting and measurement involving communities, local councils and other planning authorities. This should draw on the groundwork of the Kinesis report above, as well as the NSW Government’s Climate Change Policy Framework and (draft) Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan noted in the draft Plan. The limited detail in these policies calls for more leadership via the final Region Plan.

The Commission should also consult with Urban Growth NSW, noting the ambitious, specific and measurable targets in Urban Growth’s draft Sustainability Strategy.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} Such changes were recently enacted under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 2017,* in relation to ‘traditional’ infrastructure corridors and ‘Part 5’ activities under the Planning Act. Similar approaches could apply to green infrastructure including the Green Grid.
\textsuperscript{23} Such as SEPPs for Infrastructure, Exempt/Complying Codes, Precincts, Coastal Management, and any progression of the draft Greenfield Development and Environment SEPPs (urban bushland etc).
\textsuperscript{25} Prepared by Kinesis for the Greater Sydney Commission, 24 October 2017.

The targets include:

- reducing the use of potable water (drinking water quality) by 50%
- diverting 95% of all construction waste from landfill with a focus on recycling
Further on objective 33 and ‘An efficient city’, we recommend these objectives link more closely to the Plan’s infrastructure objectives to clearly promote low-carbon transport (see above), such as actions to assist renewable electric vehicle uptake, charging and related infrastructure.

For a more comprehensive analysis and recommendations on emissions reduction, please see our 2016 Planning for Climate Change report.27

As noted in Part A, while we generally support draft objective 35 on waste recovery and recycling, we recommend this objective be amended to refer to avoiding waste creation in the first place. Action 35.2 could give specific examples of problem areas or solutions, such as packaging innovation and collaboration, producer responsibility, consumer education and planning controls (which could, for example, create low-waste takeaway food precincts to reduce plastic container waste). Also, existing references to ‘circular economy’ design processes under objectives 34-35 should be expanded to include waste avoidance and minimisation.

Finally as noted, we recommend explicitly linking the draft Plan’s industry sector objectives, and other productivity objectives, to ‘Efficient city’ objectives and actions (33-35). Examples noted above include the retail and construction sectors.

**Objectives (36-38) - A resilient city**

We strongly support objectives to build-in climate adaptation and resilience in the Greater Sydney Region Plan. As a general comment, the strategies and actions under objectives 36 to 38 should provide more specific examples of ‘initiatives’ required for councils, communities, planners and developers to respond to climate change, the urban heat island effect and other hazards.

Statistics on the three cities in the Plan Summary (p 9) require more information on projected climate impacts, such as extreme hot days for 2036 and 2056. Including this information is very important to unequivocally demonstrate the need for strong sustainability objectives, strategies and actions; and assessing the risks of failure to set and implement them.

Under Objective 36 (People and places adapt to climate change and future shocks and stresses) we recommend this explicitly refer to animals and nature – not just people and places – and include strategies to protect climate refugia and corridors for wildlife movement.28 Native wildlife, peri-urban livestock and even domestic animals are all likely to suffer from extreme heat and other climate impacts. Wildlife

---


are clearly affected by strategic planning and development but appear to be omitted from this objective.

Given the recognised need to improve air quality in Western Sydney, we strongly recommend the final Plan include a standalone air pollution objective, strategies and targets. This is consistent with the Commission’s legislated objectives to support improved liveability, productivity and environmental quality (GSC Act s. 9). It is also consistent with objective 37, to reduce exposure to natural and urban hazards.29

The Commission should consult with the EPA and with intergovernmental partners under the National Clean Air Agreement, to embed effective strategies, actions and metrics to improve Sydney’s air quality and strengthen the community and environment’s resilience against foreseeable barriers and threats to air quality as the city grows.

**Objectives (39-40) - Implementation**

EDO NSW has recommended improvements and integration of environmental goals, outcomes and measures into monitoring and reporting frameworks under the NSW planning system over many years. This has been a major flaw in the last two Sydney metropolitan plans.

Our submission on *Towards a Greater Sydney 2056* noted the risks that specific economic aims will eclipse generic environmental aims; and also the lack of State environmental goals, targets or data to assist decision-making.30 For example, it is not sufficient to assume heritage, biodiversity or fisheries management laws include suitable and specific and measurable goals for Greater Sydney.

Turning to the 2017 draft Plan metrics, in brief:

- We welcome the proposed annual survey of community sentiment about liveability.
- We note that SMART31 metrics have been adopted in relation to housing delivery. Similar metrics could be used to set and monitor progress to net-zero emissions, with interim five or 10-year targets (at a minimum, 2036 and 2046).
- The number and quality of environmental metrics do not reflect the number and quality of the Plan’s environmental objectives.

We recommend the final Plan include further, more ambitious environmental targets and measures to underpin the three Sustainability themes: landscape, efficiency and resilience.32 This should include a set of SMART indicators, both qualitative and quantitative,33 that make the environment more visible in decision-making and aim to

---

29 As drafted, Objective 37 refers primarily to Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley flood risk management.
31 SMART indicators are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.
32 NB: The RMIT research below found that cities with less ambitious ‘liveability’ targets were more likely to achieve the targets, but performed worse on the standard liveability metrics than other cities.
33 We support a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators. E.g. ‘area of open space’ measures alone do not indicate the quality, diversity, equity of access or suitability for habitat and biodiversity.
achieve ESD. These indicators should track and report on Sydney’s biodiversity (native plants and animals, including threatened species and ecological communities), sectoral greenhouse gas emissions, air and water quality. For further examples of useful metrics beyond this submission, see the Environmental Panel Advisory Paper, Part 4; and the Urban Growth NSW draft Sustainability Strategy.

In relation to liveability metrics, research published by RMIT on Creating Liveable Cities in Australia aims to consistently measure liveability across Australia’s capital cities. The October 2017 report found that:

- In many cases government planning policies are failing to deliver liveability equitably across our cities…
- Current policies and guidelines do not appear to be informed by the growing body of evidence about how to achieve healthy, liveable cities.
- No capital city performs well across all the liveability indicators, with many failing to meet their own policy targets…

The report proposes seven recommendations to be adopted at a national, state and local level – in the seven areas of walkability, public transport, public open space, housing affordability, employment, and food and alcohol environments. It also emphasises the need for nationally consistent indicators, which we support.

We recommend the Commission closely considers the RMIT report recommendations, along with our recommendations above and those of the Environmental Panel Advisory Paper, to ensure that the Sydney Region Plan embeds best practice monitoring and reporting beyond what the draft Plan proposes.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering this submission. We hope our comments and recommendations assist the Commission to update and finalise the Greater Sydney Region Plan. We look forward to further engagement in 2018. For any further information, questions or feedback, please contact the EDO NSW Policy and Law Reform Team on (02) 9262 6989.

---

34 As recognised by the draft Plan’s concepts of green infrastructure and open space, although not necessarily reflected in measurement and reporting indicators for the draft Plan.
38 RMIT Centre for Urban Research et al., ‘A report card on liveability in our cities’ (October 2017).