

Dear Sirs,

Following, please find comments on behalf of the Northern Sub-Regional Organisation of Councils (NORSROC) which is a voluntary group comprising the seven local government areas north of Brisbane in South East Queensland. The submission has been compiled by the NORSROC Coordinator on the basis of discussions with officers and Mayors of the NORSROC Councils.

The Inquiry addresses many of the same issues that are currently being addressed by local governments in their planning schemes and other strategies. It also addresses many of the issues that are challenging us in the "**SEQ2021 - a sustainable future**" Regional Planning Process for South East Queensland. That SEQ2021 process is being undertaken as a partnership between local (18 Councils) and Queensland State Governments with input by the Commonwealth and by a regional non-government sector committee. What the Commonwealth Inquiry does not fully address is the sharing of responsibility between levels of government and especially the specific role of the Commonwealth in securing more sustainable outcomes.

**1 Preserve bushland, significant heritage and urban green zones.**

- Preservation of "green zones" is compatible with urban consolidation and can provide the contact with nature needed to provide relief to more intense urban development; and
- The Commonwealth has a role in the preservation of natural and heritage values and should be more pro-active in supporting other levels of government in protecting these values.

**2. Ensuring equitable access to and efficient use of energy, including renewable energy sources.**

- The Commonwealth has a role in providing incentives for more efficient and sustainable energy use and management practices, (eg adoption of the Kyoto protocol, development of a system of carbon trading, provision of taxation incentives for use of sustainable fuels, promotion of more sustainable practices through the National Building Code, support for research and development in the sustainable energy field, etc); and
- Providing leadership and case studies in sustainable energy management in Commonwealth buildings and other installations.

**3. Establish an integrated sustainable water and stormwater management system addressing capture, consumption, treatment and re-use opportunities.**

- While water management is largely a State and local government responsibility, the Commonwealth has a role in providing tax and other incentives to encourage more sustainable water management practices; and

- The Commonwealth has a role in undertaking (or at least underwriting) research and development of guidelines for more sustainable water management practices.

#### **4. Manage and Minimise domestic and industrial waste.**

- The Commonwealth has a role in providing taxation and other incentives for better waste management (purchasing policies that support reuse and recycling, mandated secondary resource labelling, whole of life responsibility by manufacturers for packaging, taxation and other incentives for cleaner production, etc.)

#### **5. Develop sustainable transport networks, modal complementarity and logistics.**

The discussion paper asks the question of "*What is the role of federal government...?*"

- The Commonwealth has largely abandoned its passenger transport agenda and its urban freight transport agenda (refer to the AusLink green paper). The Commonwealth should re-establish such agendas.
- Taxation policies are counter-productive to an appropriate transport outcome (use of motor vehicle and parking privileges as part of executive salary packages; fringe benefits tax methods of calculation on employer-provided cars creating incentives to drive high mileages; vehicle purchasing policies favouring heavy, fuel guzzling vehicles in preference to fuel efficient light cars; import duties favouring heavy four-wheel drive vehicles; GST on public transport fares and on public transport inputs add additional burdens.)
- The lack of hypothecation of fuel excise back into transport infrastructure and services discriminates against better transport outcomes.

#### **6. Incorporate eco-efficiency principles into new buildings and housing.**

- The Commonwealth has a role to play in setting appropriate standards (eg. National Building code);
- The Commonwealth has a role in fostering (and supporting) research and guidelines for improved eco-efficiency;
- The Commonwealth can provide taxation and other incentives for adoption of more sustainable materials and more sustainable development and building practices; and
- The Commonwealth can demonstrate better practices through its own buildings and management practices.

#### **7. Develop urban plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities.**

- Reference is made in the discussion paper to increasing dwelling size and cost. This is largely a function of taxation policy whereby the "principle place of residence" is the only haven from capital gains tax, leading to people building far larger and more elaborate dwellings than

their lifestyle requirements would require. This "overbuilding" influences the whole dwelling market to the point where affordability and sustainability are severely challenged. Other, more beneficial, avenues for individuals to capture capital gains should be offered;

- In the development of alternative urban models, the paper does not address the type of city structured with a transport and economic development focus on local centres with high quality line-haul transport connecting to progressively higher-order centres. Vancouver Canada (see case study 3 in the discussion paper), and Portland Oregon are successful examples we could benefit from studying further;
- "Savvy developers" may be "promoting" lifestyle opportunities, but in practice, the "integration" of services and facilities in so-called "master-planned communities" are generally very limited and do not often provide high levels of accessibility to employment, to goods and services, nor to opportunities for social, cultural and economic contact and exchange; and
- The Commonwealth has a role in promoting and supporting more integrated community outcomes through initiatives such as the earlier "Better Cities" Program. The re-establishment of such programs would be greatly appreciated.

### Conclusion

The Commonwealth is commended for undertaking this inquiry. One principle of the Inquiry should be to offer an appropriate role for the Commonwealth in re-establishing an urban agenda and re-instating appropriate programs to provide effective support to other levels of government which are currently grappling with these urban challenges. Finally, the Commonwealth should examine areas of influence under its responsibility where adjustments of policy direction (taxation policy, transport investment, statutory regulation, research and extension, and undertaking of demonstration projects) could make significant contributions to the sustainability of Australian Cities and of City Regions.

If you require any further information or clarification, please feel free to contact me by;

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Yours faithfully,

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