



## Principles of a Good Planning System

### Policy Background

- In 2001, HIA launched a national position statement on planning systems, known as Better Living Environments. The position statement focused on three core tenants – flexibility, predictability and affordability. Within these tenants, various case studies and examples of good planning practices that would assist in the delivery of new land and housing were identified.
- Following Better Living Environments HIA has developed a series of policy statements that address individual elements of the planning system, covering issues such as ‘truth in zoning’, managing urban land supply, development contributions, subsidised affordable housing and more. Today these planning policy statements form the basis of HIA’s advocacy for an improved planning system.
- It was agreed there would be benefit in creating a statement that concisely sets out the fundamentals of a good planning system that can serve as a foundation statement on the planning system and the delivery of land and residential developments.

### Policy Issues

- In the absence of other regulatory levers, the planning system is now seen as the panacea for any matter that governments believe warrants oversight, making the system extremely complex for all parties to navigate.
- Over the last decade, policy makers have sought to address a growing list of social and environmental issues that have not traditionally been matters for consideration in the planning system.
- A planning system must recognise the importance of delivering housing affordable outcomes. This can only be achieved where the planning system manages the zoning of land and the development of that land in a timely manner balancing the social, economic and environmental benefit of the whole community.

### HIA’s Policy Position on Principles of a Good Planning System

#### 1. Certainty

- a. The planning system must provide certainty to those utilising it.
- b. Planning codes and policy must be clearly written to provide certainty to the users and planning authorities of the items that are required to be addressed and the available scope for discretion in decision making.
- c. Assessment and determination processes must be reasonable, efficient and relevant to the zoning of the land and other known constraints on the land.
- d. The planning system should seek to eliminate repetition and duplication of information requests and assessments.
- e. Planning application requirements must not overlap or exceed building application requirements.

- f. Planning systems must support truth in zoning by facilitating the development of permitted land uses within each zone.
- g. Planning systems should not permit the retrospective application of 'new' requirements or constraints unless compensation is provided to property owners who lose a development right.
- h. Fees and charges for planning services should reflect the cost of assessment, be readily calculated and be disclosed prior to lodgement of any application.
- i. Planning codes and policies should not incorporate technical building requirements.

## **2. Consistency**

- a. Policies developed to guide planning decisions must be written in concise language and be readily and consistently interpreted.
- b. The planning system should support consistency of outcomes by providing adequate guidance for design development and decision making.
- c. Planning design codes should be applied at the highest level (i.e. state government) to avoid ad-hoc design standards across individual local council areas.

## **3. Flexibility**

- a. Planning codes and policy should include both performance objectives and prescriptive standards to provide a degree of flexibility and support changing housing market trends and innovation in housing design and technology.

## **4. Transparency**

- a. The planning system should be transparent to the community and the development industry.
- b. Planning decisions should be easily understood and have limited potential for real or perceived intervention or influence.

## **5. Simple, clear processes**

- a. The planning system should provide processes that do not create undue regulatory burdens for users.
- b. Information requirements should be concise, with clear obligations, steps and timelines for the provision of details to the planning authority by an applicant.
- c. Planning assessment and determination processes must be reasonable, efficient and relevant to the zoning of the land and type of development proposed.
- d. The planning and building systems must provide a single approval pathway for single dwellings and dual occupancy dwellings on land zoned for residential development.

## **6. Strategically led planning**

- a. The planning system should embed a strategic approach to spatial planning which balances competing priorities and requires planning authorities to take a holistic approach to achieving planning outcomes, recognising a balance between economic, social and environmental factors.

## **7. Independent, merit based decisions**

- b. Planning decisions should be made by informed, independent parties based on the merits of the application, compliance with any relevant statutory requirements and a sound evidence base.

**8. Accountability for decisions**

- a. Planning system should provide clear accountability for the decision making processes and the decisions made on behalf of the community.
- b. All planning decisions (zoning, subdivision, development) should be provided with a right of appeal to an independent administrative body.
- c. The planning system should not allow multiple planning authorities or agencies to be responsible for overlapping requirements or the duplication of requirements and approval obligations.

**9. Outcome oriented decisions**

- a. Decisions in an effective planning system must be focused on the outcomes, rather than details that have little bearing on the impact of development on the community.
- b. The planning system should facilitate:
  - i. The development of land in an economically viable manner in accordance with its zoning.
  - ii. The timely zoning of land for residential purposes based on a transparent strategic assessment involving all relevant agencies with clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.
  - iii. Governments managing land supply, in consultation with the residential development industry, to ensure there is an adequate supply of land at each stage of the land supply pipeline.
  - iv. The delivery of public infrastructure that supports residential land zoning and development in a timely manner for the social and environmental benefit of the whole community.

**10. Timely decision making**

- a. Timely decision making means compliance with statutory timeframes where they exist, recognition of the importance of economic investment that results from development approvals and agreement between decision makers and applicants on a program to decision making.