

17/09/09

PIA POSITION

Development assessment (DA) is the assessment of development proposals against the relevant codes or ordinances in accordance with the legislative processes and requirements of the relevant State or Territory.

DA that is streamlined and integrated is crucial to achieve:

- development proposals that deliver the economic, social and environmental outcomes that communities seek from planning systems
- good quality decisions at reasonable cost (in terms of both the nature of the approved development and the speed of the decision)
- public confidence in the planning system.

PIA endorses the Development Assessment Forum (DAF) Ten Leading Practices identified by 'A Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia' March 2005 as a basis for reform of development assessment systems and legislation in Australia. The DAF provides an important national focus for improvements to DA systems.

PIA calls for the following action to support a robust development assessment system in Australia:

1. Implementation by all states and territories of the Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment; including the establishment of development assessment panels (DAPs) for professional determination of applications; a single point of assessment; and, the implementation of track-based assessment that corresponds with the level of assessment required to make an appropriately informed decision, recognising the different levels of application complexity.
2. An increased emphasis and commensurate resources for strategic planning and policy planning as a platform for sound development assessment decision making.
3. There should be clarity and transparency of decision making powers, with development decisions being made by the appropriate level of government. Other than for state/territory significant projects, all decisions should be made by local or regional level DAPs or under delegated authority by planning DA staff.
4. Measuring the performance of development assessment systems, provided that measures and benchmarks are developed to deal with qualitative issues related to outcomes for the community, rather than focusing solely on matters of speed in decision making on development applications. Reviews should include the quality and conformity after construction, with feedback into the improvement of development policies.
5. The introduction of measures and processes to minimise the incidence of corruption.
6. Ongoing investigation of the opportunities for technology to assist within improving the quality and efficiency of development assessment, including electronic lodgement.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

DA is often the public face of planning, deciding how land is to be used and developed. DA's 'gatekeeper' role of ensuring suitably located and designed development, in conjunction with comprehensive strategic planning, is critical to the successful functioning of our planning systems and increasingly recognised as a significant contributor to positive economic outcomes.

Planning systems have been placed under pressure and scrutiny through community expectations that DA should be increasingly refined and sensitive in considering matters such as climate change, affordable housing, energy and water efficiency, mixed use developments, noise, soil contamination, protection of native vegetation, stormwater management, water sensitive urban design, bushfire mitigation, crime prevention, urban design, heritage, character and the public realm.

Examples of other current factors impacting upon DA include:

- A robust economy driving investment in infrastructure and commercial development.
- Changing household structures, housing preferences and affordability, coupled with compact city strategies and 'peak-oil' concerns, driving medium to high density development.
- Increased densities bringing people physically closer together, creating great opportunities for vibrant communities as well as potential for increased conflict.
- On the fringes of urban areas, pressures for rural living bring conflict with adjoining primary producers due to the impacts of residential development and the noise, smells and other impacts of primary production.
- Changing rural trends associated with drought and globalisation.

17/09/09

DA relies on up-to-date planning policy against which development applications can be assessed that clearly reflects state/territory and local strategies. Frequently there is insufficient emphasis placed by Governments on strategic planning and keeping policy up-to-date.

In some jurisdictions DA planners are over occupied by legislative requirements that require planners to assess minor development matters often at the expense of focussing on more important development, strategy and policy issues.

A wide range of initiatives in addition to those above should be considered to assist in the refinement of DA processes such as:

- Improving the 'front end' of development assessment processes through better and more consistent / standardised guidance to applicants and electronic 'self service' application systems.
- Annually refined / reviewed and where appropriate, expanded, delegated authority to planning staff and DAPs to make decisions regarding development applications. An application's scale, complexity and potential impacts should reflect the level at which decisions are made.
- Alignment of public notification and third-party appeal rights with planning policy, so that those applications which comply or meet desired development standards are granted lower levels of notification than those which are significantly at variance or contrary to development policies (with a graduated increase in notification in between).
- Reducing the number of referrals and referral times to Government agencies through maximising integration of appropriate policies in planning instruments / ordinances / development plans.
- Introduction of private planning certification only for matters where assessment can be made against clear, measurable technical standards without professional judgement being exercised.
- Greater education and training in the development system for the housing and development industry to improve the inputs in the development assessment process.

In summary, a range of pressures are impacting on DA and planning systems:

- High community expectations for good quality sustainable development
- High levels of development activity fuelled by a strong economy
- Expectations, particularly from the development industry, for streamlined development assessment
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining DA planners (partly associated with workplace stresses, particularly in local government) and a national shortage in the availability of planners
- The need for up to date and clear policy upon which to base DA decisions
- Excessive focus in some jurisdictions on minor development matters.

There are varying systems of development assessment in the different jurisdictions throughout Australia and there is the need for each of the States and Territories to share knowledge regarding innovations, successes and failures in the various systems.

PIA ACTION

PIA will lobby all levels of government to achieve a more robust development assessment system through submissions, advocacy forums, and membership of relevant national and state/territory committees, such as the National Housing Supply Council, Development Assessment Forum, ACIF, ASBEC and the COAG planning taskforce.

THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM:

Development Assessment Forum (DAF) 'A Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia', March 2005

PIA (SA) 'Policy Statement on Streamlined Development Assessment', October 2008

RELATED REFERENCES

PIA National Planning Report Card 'Planners telling it like it is' 2007

PIA (SA) 'Development Assessment – The Inside View', December 2007 with the support of the Local Government Research and Development Scheme (SA Local Government Association).

01/05/07

PIA POSITION

There has been substantial comment on the needs, advantages and opportunities presented by integrating land use and transport planning. Decisions regarding transport investment, mode and location have had a huge impact upon the development of Australia's regions and cities. Yet in many instances land use planning and decision making has occurred with little or no regard for resultant impacts on transport and movement, funding or investment. Additionally, transport planning and investment decisions continue to occur with an inadequate understanding of the land use and development consequences of such decision making.

PIA supports integrated land use and transport planning which acknowledges that transport and development are not two separate things but two facets of the same challenge (i.e. transport is land use planning). Fundamentally, PIA supports an integrated planning and decision making framework where land use planning processes fully account for the transport implications and requirements of our towns, cities and regions. PIA supports transport planning and decision making that has due regard to the land use and development implications of these activities. PIA supports an integrated planning and decision making framework that considers cost effective and efficient and sustainable movement of people and freight, and a focus to reduce car dependency and subsequent emissions.

PIA calls for the following actions:

- The promotion and development of cooperative, comprehensive, and on-going transport planning processes, fully integrated with the land use planning process, which are coordinated, innovative and have financial commitments from all levels of government and stakeholders.
- Development and implementation of procedures that strengthen links between the planning and programming processes and ensure that transport projects are clearly designed, prioritized and implemented to enhance the defined long term planning goals of our cities and metropolitan regions.
- Federal and state legislation that defines and embraces transport planning requirements as part of broader land use planning and development assessment.
- Commonwealth and state funded comprehensive, multimodal transport planning, integrated with desired land use outcomes that forms the basis of investment decisions.
- The development of integrated multimodal transport systems that serve individual, local, regional, state, national, and global needs. The transport and movement systems must be designed and delivered to enhance travel choice, mobility, access, sustainable development, and economic efficiency.
- Sharing of responsibility for and interest in transport decisions amongst all levels of Government.
- National, State, regional and local Land Use and Transport plans and programs should be developed and implemented through processes in which the responsibility and authority for planning and decision-making are shared among all levels of Government.
- Transport investments that deliver significant public benefits in the form of improved mobility, efficiency of distribution, environmental quality, growth management, land use, housing affordability, social equity, historic preservation, urban design and economic development.
- Greater Commonwealth assistance in the funding of metropolitan and interurban public transport improvements and research into innovative transport modes and alternative fuels.
- Commonwealth and state collaboration in the development of alternative funding mechanisms for the provision of urban transport infrastructure which where appropriate can leverage private sector funding.
- Increased Commonwealth and State Government funding of research and data collection to improve planning and the integration of research results into the planning process at regional and local levels.
- Improved structure and concept planning for new land development areas by both the public and private sectors, reflecting best practice in integrated land use and transport planning.

01/05/07

POLICY PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The National Charter of Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning was endorsed by the Transport Ministers at a meeting of the Australian Transport Council on 23 May 2003 and by the Council of Local Government and Planning Ministers Meeting in July 2003. The endorsement of the Charter by both Councils establishes a national commitment to an agreed set of good planning practices and to working together to achieve better land use and transport outcomes across Australia.

Subsequently, in April of 2006, the three spheres of government agreed on a framework within which services are to be funded and delivered to the community at the local level. The inter-governmental agreement seeks to provide the overall framework for developing further agreements between local government and the other spheres of government. The inter-governmental agreement reaffirms the commitment to the 2003 Charter.

PIA notes that all States, Territories, and the Commonwealth Government have collaborated to develop the Charter. The Charter is designed to support existing and future planning mechanisms by providing a national commitment to a framework for sustainable, responsive planning, consistent decision making, and good design and management. The Local Government and Planning Ministers Meeting noted that responsibility for its implementation now rests with each State, Territory and the Commonwealth governments and that local governments will play a central role in land use and transport planning for local areas.

PIA supports an audit process of the Charter to determine how implementation of the Charter's principles has progressed, identify successes upon which to build and to identify policy or institutional barriers that need to be addressed to enhance the successful implementation of the Charter.

PIA ACTION

PIA will continue to lobby Commonwealth, State and Local Governments and Industry to ensure that processes are implemented to bring about greater land use and transport integration with consequent environmental benefits, for the betterment of Australia's Cities, Towns and Regions.

THIS POLICY DERIVES FROM

PIA Sustainable Communities Policy 2006

RELATED REFERENCES

National Charter of Integrated Land use and Transport Planning 2003

01/05/08

PIA POSITION

An efficient and effective planning system requires a well-resourced and skilled professional workforce. Planners play a critical role in delivering effective, functional, and sustainable cities, towns, neighbourhoods, and regions. The work planners do is becoming more important as society places greater emphasis on environmental sustainability, liveable communities and high quality urban design in order to build a nation that is valued today and by future generations. It is essential that the planning profession is strong, dynamic, highly skilled, and able to meet the challenges of managing urban growth in our cities and regions.

The 2004 PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment found serious labour market deficiencies, concerns that planners were not receiving appropriate education and training, and widespread acknowledgement that planners experience unacceptable stress in the workplace. Comments and feedback from over 700 respondents from the 2007 Report Card about the planning workforce reiterated the 2004 Inquiry findings about workplace stress and the chronic shortage of planners.

Other State and local surveys including the 2007 National Skills Shortage Strategy undertaken by the Local Government Managers Association also support these findings.

PIA requires the following action by all levels of government and the private sector in partnership with PIA to address these issues:

1. Increase the supply of planners by

- Commonwealth Government to increase overseas immigration opportunities and the Commonwealth Government to include the planning profession on the "Migration Occupations in Demand List".
- Commonwealth Government to increase the number of fully funded university places for planning students with commensurate increase in resources for planning schools.
- Universities and PIA to work together to continue to establish new courses and to offer programs at university planning schools for students from specific target schools including Indigenous Australian, rural/regional communities and from states/territories that do not have planning courses.
- Vocational Educators to support the role and training of planning assistants through certificate IV courses and the creation of para-planning positions.
- PIA to encourage planning assistants to join PIA as Associate members.

2. Improve Training opportunities by:

- Employers to provide appropriate financial support for professional development and ongoing training.
- PIA in partnership with employers to continue to establish mentoring programs for students and university graduates.
- PIA to establish professional development scheme that is constantly reviewed and updated to ensure a relevant and high professional standard within the planning profession. PIA has already implemented a Certified Practicing Planner program, and requires Employers to support the development and profile of the program.
- State Governments to create cadetships for regional planner working in local government.

3. Encourage the Retention of planners by:

- Employers, particularly local government to ensure that flexible working conditions are available, particularly within local governments, to support work life balance and to encourage qualified and experienced female planners back into the workforce.
- Improve the development assessment system by adopting Development Assessment Forum leading Practice Model to streamline government processes and regulations at all levels.
- PIA in partnership with State and local Governments ensuring the value planners add to our cities and lives is recognised.
- PIA to work together with government, non government agencies, private sector, and educational institutions to raise the profile, reputation and influence of the planning profession and improve the community understanding of the roles of urban and regional planning in enhancing the quality of life of Australians.

01/05/08

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Planners are faced today with increasing pressure from the new and complicated planning regimes, increase development and higher community and political expectations. This is exacerbated by acute undersupply of planners and staff shortages.

The need to lift the profile of planning is important along with the promotion of the significance and value that the profession contributes to our communities to attract new planning students and those seeking a career change. Councils are generally understaffed due to lack of positive, high profile for the profession in general.

The major findings of the 2004 PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment included:

- Most cities and their regions and “sea change” communities are suffering a critical shortage of planners. Over the past three years there has been on average a 16% vacancy rate in planning positions. Local government, as the largest employer of planners, faces the biggest challenge with recruiting and retaining planners.
- Rural and regional areas suffer from long term shortage of planners. They find it difficult to recruit planning staff.
- Planners are often subject to completely unacceptable work stress. Sources include political pressure, high volumes of work, legislative requirements, demand from the community and the development industry and limited human and financial resources.
- Post-graduate training of planners has become increasingly important due to the ever changing nature of the job but getting time away from the office to attend training can be difficult, available training can be ad hoc or expensive and for rural and regional planners, difficult to access.

The inquiry proposed a number of recommendations to address the full range of employment, workplace, and professional development issues. Since the release of the findings of the Inquiry the chronic shortage of planners still remains a problem though many initiatives are now underway to address the problem.

THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM:

PIA Finding & Recommendations of the National Inquiry into Planning, Education and Employment 2004

PIA Planning Report Card, 2007 (confidential comments provided by respondents)

National Skills Shortage Strategy for Local Government, May 2007, LGMA

01/12/07

PIA POSITION

Long term planning for cities and towns including housing, infrastructure, employment, and social services is central to effective Urban Growth Management (UGM) and essential for establishing attractive, affordable, sustainable, well serviced communities with access to employment opportunities.

UGM is the application of planning tools in a coordinated manner to guide development of cities and towns towards desired patterns of growth.

There is a need for wide consideration in the relevant jurisdictions of the whole process and the tools of UGM to ensure that all necessary components are in place to deliver effective UGM and the resultant liveable, sustainable towns and cities.

The PIA is concerned that there is not a robust and coordinated Federal Government engagement in urban development issues to facilitate better UGM outcomes throughout Australia. This is of particular significance given the substantial dependence of the Australian economy on efficient and sustainable cities for positive economic development and the increasing recognition of the potential environmental impacts of urban development.

Governments need to be clear about the full range of planning tools and how they operate and interact to manage growth or urban areas. There also needs to be articulation of how these tools will be used in the future. The tools should be used in conjunction with a vision or clear picture of the desired outcomes, with a publicly available set of guiding principles.

The planning tools will be likely to include many of the following: planning strategies (for example Melbourne 2030, South East Queensland Regional Plan and the Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide); urban containment boundaries; planning ordinances / zoning; land banking; sequencing of land release; delivery of infrastructure such as public transport and community facilities; transport planning; and collaborative strategic planning and, master planning (for districts and local areas).

PIA ADVOCATES THE FOLLOWING ACTION ON UGM:

Federal Government recognition of the importance of cities to economic and community well-being including through providing greater leadership and support for UGM and in particular promotion of successful UGM models.

All jurisdictions to adopt coordinated approaches to UGM that include the following features:

1. Establishing clear visions for the development of cities and towns with sustainability indicators and incorporation of community engagement that may include approaches such as scenario planning.
2. Adoption of a set of guiding principles (such as those outlined above) to include consideration of the following:
 - Integration of transport and especially public transport
 - Sustainable economic development and employment
 - Access to affordable housing, choice of housing and sustainable design
 - Impacts of changes in demographics
 - Greater focus on coordinated inner and middle suburban redevelopment
 - Minimisation of the need for expansion of urban areas through better use of land in existing urban areas and at the urban fringe
 - Improved use of natural resources and reduction of the ecological footprint
 - Developing vibrant mixed use communities
 - Coordination of development and sequencing of land release with social and physical infrastructure delivery
 - Spatial design and land use mix to minimise greenhouse gas emissions
 - Addressing the impacts of climate change on urban development

Ensuring the availability, coordination and effectiveness of a set of UGM tools include elements such as:

- Effective strategic and spatial planning process embodied in legislation
- Urban containment boundaries to reinforce the need for careful consideration of urban expansion
- Effective connection between strategic planning process and implementation mechanisms such as zoning and land use policy
- Mechanisms enabling the coordination and sequencing of land release with social and physical infrastructure delivery (possibly including growth area authorities)
- Land banking and land assembly mechanisms (i.e. government or private sector land ownership in key areas to improve growth management)
- Integrated land use and transport planning

01/12/07

3. More empirical research on UGM including urban regeneration and related planning matters.
4. Improved dissemination of research and community information to aid better understanding of UGM issues.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Any pattern of urban growth has social, economic, and environmental implications that need to be considered and balanced in deciding the most desirable urban growth solution.

It is important to underpin UGM and the use of the planning tools with a series of integrated principles. The following are considered to be a useful starting point:

- Minimising the environmental footprint of urban areas through careful site selection, minimising land area and the environmental impact of development within the urban area.
- Aligning transport systems (and in particular maximising integration of public transport) and land use to optimise accessibility in a well connected network, reduce car dependency and promote alternative travel modes (walking and cycling).
- Considering housing affordability in ensuring adequate land supply, sequencing of development, and availability and choice of various forms of housing.
- Ensuring availability of accessible employment and potential for new employment opportunities in establishing new urban development.
- Providing opportunities for compact and mixed forms of development in existing urban areas to ensure good use to, and improving economic viability of public transport.
- Ensuring that the provision of key infrastructure and community services is coordinated with the delivery and sequencing of land release, particularly at the urban fringe.
- Considering the potential role of land-banking on the urban fringe or in growth areas, and land assembly in inner and middle suburbs, to ensure an adequate supply of available land in appropriate locations that can sequentially be made available for development.
- Ensuring public benefit from changes in zoning that enable development at the fringe and through enabling more intense development in established areas.
- Avoiding development on land that is suitable for agricultural use, by giving greater weight to the need for retention of such land in close proximity to cities and towns.
- Considering carefully, in the context of metropolitan cities, and appropriate, mix between compact infill / regeneration and development at the fringe or growth corridors where appropriate, or alternatively development in other locations.
- Ensuring clear policies are in place to promote quality buildings and urban spaces.
- Ensuring measurement tools are in place, including regular review and reporting mechanisms.

THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM:

PIA SA Draft Urban Growth Management Policy, 2007
 PIA Sustainable Communities Policy, 2006
 PIA National Report Card, 2006 & 2007
 PIA QLD Draft Policy Position on Urban Consolidation, 2007