



Australian Institute
of Landscape Architects

National Policy Statement

SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT

government, the professions and the community working together

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects calls on the Commonwealth and State Governments to develop an overarching sustainable settlement policy as a matter of national priority.

In the face of international recognition of the emerging threats posed by abrupt and irreversible damage to the climate of our planet, governments around the world are increasingly adopting aggressive mitigation portfolios in their policy approaches to:

- Current sustainability challenges relating to developments across the spectrum of metropolitan, suburban, coastal, regional and remote settlements.
- Those settlements being planned for the future generations as cities expand.
- Those settlement areas requiring urgent retrofitting to deal with current climate change impacts.

Within Australia, significant leadership has been demonstrated across all levels of government in relation to sustainable settlement, through a wide range and scale of initiatives targeting carbon pollution reduction, energy efficiency, emissions trading, renewable energy, infrastructure and water.

The National Sustainable Settlement Policy should build on such existing initiatives and provide support to them by locating them within an integrated national framework.

A new national approach to settlement policy

The national Sustainable Settlement policy would provide:

- An overarching and integrated strategy by which Commonwealth, State and Local Government policy initiatives can operate within a national/state framework.
- The framework that links and integrates other urban related policies such as 'smart cities', urban design, sustainability charters, built environment policies and sustainable communities.
- Guidance in the development of capital city strategic planning systems, (currently under co-ordination and review by COAG), as well as decision-making support for other COAG initiatives, including focus on national climate adaptation response and housing supply and affordability.

Settlement (not settlements)

A national policy framework on sustainable settlement would be capable of addressing sustainability challenges not only in relation to urban and suburban development, but also within the context of the broader spectrum of impacts and expressions of human settlement across the nation.

In sustainability terms, human settlement is about activity and effect, not just about towns and people. The way we extract and manage natural resources, conduct business, agriculture and tourism, protect or damage carbon sinks, live with the bush, the desert and the forests—all of these and more are characteristics of human settlement which impact across local, national and international scales.

At the most fundamental level, a national policy on Sustainable Settlement should be designed to accommodate the complex interactions, complementarities and conflicts which occur between individual sustainability parameters (such as energy, water, population growth, transport, infrastructure, climate, natural resources etc.), and their subsequent impact on the patterns and effects of human settlement at local, regional and national scales—and to enable rigorous analysis and optimization of necessary ‘tradeoffs’ in decision-making to support broader national sustainability goals.

The National Sustainable Settlement policy directions should leverage and build on existing policy development and delivery mechanisms—e.g. collaborative, co-operative and integrated strategies between local, state and federal governments such as COAG, within a strong community and stakeholder consultation process.

Seeking integrated design solutions for National Sustainable Settlement

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects strongly urges Australia’s Federal and State Governments to provide an integrated vision for a sustainable future and to implement a National Sustainable Settlement policy that will guide a consistency of approach in all settlement development across the nation.

Key Elements of a National Sustainable Settlement Policy

- 1. Landscape Function:** Given that landscapes and their associated ecosystems provide the fundamental support system for life on earth, Governments need to reassess the role of landscape function & performance in creating more resilient and sustainable human settlements.
- 2. Adaptation for Climate Change:** Sustainable settlement provides the framework to identify problems and collectively devise strategies to deal with the challenge of climate change. In order to respond to climate change within the planning and development of Sustainable Settlements, Governments need to develop National Urban Design Protocols to more effectively guide the management of available resources to achieve sustainability within all future Australian urban development.
- 3. Green Infrastructure:** In the planning and development of all settlement green infrastructure, Governments need to assist with programs that provide leadership in proactively maximising opportunities for the enhancement and regeneration of ecosystem services rather than the practice of simply minimising damage to ecosystems.

This Policy statement is part of the AILA’s Sustainable Settlement suite of Policy Statements on Australian Landscape Architecture, the profession committed to the creation of meaningful and enjoyable outdoor places and to the sustainable management of our built and natural environment.

More details on AILA National Policy Statements: www.aila.org.au/policies

All queries on National Policy should be directed to the AILA’s CEO.

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