

Tasmania

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Department of State Growth

Email: consultation@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission – Tasmanian population strategy refresh

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Paper for the Tasmanian Population Strategy Refresh, December 2022.

The Planning Institute of Australia, Tasmanian Division (PIA Tas) commends the Government for addressing this significant strategic issue given the anticipated economic and population growth in this State in at least the short to medium term. While PIA Tas welcomes the initiative of refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy, it emphasises the need for sound planning principles to guide the strategy and its implementation.

Although Tasmania's population has grown faster than projected in recent years, this growth has been unevenly distributed. Tasmania has one of the lowest birth rates in Australia¹, an ageing population and workforce², and has difficulties attracting and retaining young people to meet the needs of the local economy. This imbalance will adversely affect Tasmania's long-term sustainability and sense of what is valued here, the Tasmanian brand, if inadequately managed. Placemaking and liveability principles will be key to accommodating the expected growth.

PIA is the peak body representing planning professionals and supports reform that improves planning processes and outcomes, especially through well-resourced strategic planning based on a strong evidence base consistent with PIA Australia's positions on liveability, health, [national and local settlement strategies](#), [climate conscious planning systems](#) and management of risk in a changing environment³.

Methods for delivery of National and State Population and Planning Frameworks is encouraged, consistent with PIA's position on the need for well researched and informed strategic policy for settlement, growth and development at the National and State levels. Similarly, the recognition that wellbeing and liveability are critical to future growth and development is supported and consistent with PIA's strategic and policy objectives.

Context

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/births-australia/latest-release>.

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/1cd2b1952afc5e7aca257298000f2e76#:~:text=Tasmania%20experienced%20the%20largest%20increase,contributed%20to%20this%20accelerated%20ageing>.

³ <https://www.planning.org.au/ourcampaigns>

The references in the document do not cover the significant amount of strategic work that has been done through the land use planning reform agenda or the importance of data sources such as the State of Environment (SoE) Reports required to be produced under Tasmanian legislation. In the past reports such as the SoE have addressed measures such as carrying capacity, an important consideration for the Tasmanian Brand. The three regional land use strategies need to be acknowledged, albeit that they are outdated, as these are a key tool for implementation. So are the Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) that are about to be formally considered by the Tasmania Planning Commission.

In the section providing information on how we plan for and manage further population trends and issues a table (page 4) is included outlining benefits and challenges of population growth. The lists do not appear to have been produced from a risk-based approach therefore some of the constraints to development are not listed that may affect development such as climate change, extreme weather events and the like. Amendments and additional challenges should be included in any updated version of the table:

- It would be better to talk about provision of active and alternative forms of transport rather than congestion, a Hobart specific challenge, and generally highlight that transportation to different destinations around Tasmania between regions may also be a challenge;
- Ageing physical infrastructure and the significant costs of retrofitting;
- Housing availability, in addition to affordability, supply and diversity;
- Economic challenges from lower wages; and
- Limits to development footprints resulting from climate change, including the need for settlements, infrastructure, and services to be more resilient and adaptable.

The measuring outcomes and impacts section (page 8) suggests that the Strategy should be updated on a 5-to-10-year basis, and it is observed that:

- existing strategic documents across Government and Tasmania consistently suffer from a lack of up-to-date data and require significant investment each time they are reviewed to overcome this, usually at the local or regional level (an example is the data collection being undertaken for the current regional land use planning projects being coordinated by the State Planning Office) – there is an opportunity for the State Demographer, announced in the recent State of the State address, to provide the necessary management and coordination of this;
- a range of update periods are required to monitor the impacts, principles and objectives based on differing data sets;
- Integration with land use and development data is required to provide real time information on current and emerging development trends, particularly relating to approval types and rates, supply and uptake trends;
- the Population Strategy needs to reflect a range of update thresholds to monitor progress on the principles, objectives and impact that suits the relevant criteria; and
- data sets, monitoring development and demographics must be on a consistent basis, including across regions, in conjunction with the relevant state and local government agencies (typically legislated at 5 years).

The environment barely features in Consultation Paper - only a brief mention on environment and climate in the context of wellbeing (page 6). Climate change has a direct influence on liveability (vibrant cities and regions), improved living standards, the State's

emission profile, and the potential impacts of population growth on food and water security, natural hazards and settlements. Rapid population ageing affects vulnerability to natural hazards. This oversight should be addressed.

Specific issues to consider

Following are themes for consideration in drafting the strategy. The submission does not directly address the objective consultation questions outlined in the Consultation Paper and instead a thematic approach is taken because, from a planning perspective, the issues are integrated and have relevance to all four objectives. It may necessitate some repetition to address the issues under each objective and should be considered for how the Strategy will integrate into other systems.

Need for a State settlement strategy

We need an overarching settlement strategy for the State, directing population growth to areas that can sustain more people. This means comprehensively mapping those areas of the state that will be at heightened risk of sea level rise, wildfire, flooding, and extreme storm events, and directing new growth away from those areas. We also need to consider managed retreat as part of the strategy, redirecting people away from hazardous places to areas that can support intensification of development (e.g., with good access to services and infrastructure).

Prior to 2020 many areas of Tasmania were planning for potential decline rather than growth. Even with growth occurring, it is likely to be uneven spatially and temporally and will impact different age cohorts in different ways. For example, some areas become popular at different times and all areas can't grow indefinitely. When growth reaches capacity in a particular area it will no longer grow – how we want to grow needs to be directed by state policy and strategy.

The Minister for Planning is currently considering a suite of TPPs including one for settlement. It is important that this be progressed as soon as possible to provide the overarching vision about how everything links – planning for facilities to support growth, integrating with social infrastructure and creating connected communities. This needs to be linked to the State and local government financing capacities noting that this is likely to be more challenging in regional locations.

As noted above the current reforms in the planning sector have resulted in a plethora of strategic documents such as regional land use strategies, local structure plans, industrial land strategies and the like. Instead of overlaying more strategic documents it is important to bring together what we already have and adopt a coordinated approach.

Climate change impacts

Related to a State settlement strategy, population growth is occurring against a backdrop of accelerating climate change. Page 11 of the Consultation Paper notes that climate change is a driver of migration.

Extreme heat events are going to become more frequent and intense according to Climate Futures forecasting⁴ and we will need to ensure that new development not only complies with the National Construction Code, but that retrofitting existing housing is also occurring, and that vulnerable housing is addressed as part of any urban consolidation strategy. While it is certainly desirable to pursue urban densification over greenfield development, this will necessitate better urban greening measures to mitigate urban heat island effects. Data shows that heatwaves have killed more Australians than all other natural hazards (combined) and we need to avoid an increase in heatwave morbidity and mortality in

⁴ https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/recfit/what_are_the_projected_impacts_for_tasmania

Tasmania.⁵ If the strategy is committed to putting wellbeing at its heart (page 6) then heatwaves and climate change will also need to be central.

In considering planning arrangements that improve liveability the government is urged to take into account the above points as part of those arrangements. This should include adding in new provisions into the Tasmanian Planning Scheme (such as for the provision of open space, vegetation, and landscaping as part of development approvals).

Tasmanian settlements are highly car dependent. According to the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE), Hobart and Launceston have the fourth worst and worst, respectively, access to bus stops of any major Australian city.⁶ A safe and equitable population strategy, which addresses the mitigation of carbon emissions, needs to ensure there is a much higher level of investment in improving alternative and public transport, to make it safer, more reliable, more efficient, and more flexible for users.

The effects of a worsening housing crisis

Housing availability and affordability continues to be an issue across Australia, including in Tasmania. PIA's National housing affordability policy position is that urban and regional planning, including development of strategic land use policy and planning frameworks at all levels of government, is critical in the provision of appropriate, affordable, safe, secure, sustainable, and well-located housing. Planning policy can, and should, be structured in a way that promotes and facilitates the provision of housing in appropriate context, and to advocate for an appropriate balance with community involvement and quality outcomes.

Housing costs continue to rise faster than income growth leading to an increased proportion of Tasmanian households under housing stress, that is paying more than 30 percent of their income in rent or mortgage payments, or at risk of homelessness. If this situation continues to worsen, it will have additional adverse effects on the health, quality of life and well-being of many Tasmanians (such as the deterioration of the mental and physical health of those most affected; the exacerbation of displacement and gentrification issues, further deteriorating social cohesion and trust). The worsening of the housing crisis will likely affect younger people more since they tend to have a lower income and lower savings.

Overall, there is a need to increase the supply of housing for residents and find specific solutions for key worker housing. Recognition of the role of key worker housing is very important in providing employment options for those interested in moving to Tasmania and to provide the necessary services for a growing population. We are already seeing the economic impact of businesses in coastal tourist towns having to close at times due to a lack of employees because they are unable to find housing in the area.

In considering solutions to the housing crisis issues need to be addressed such as managing the impact of visitor accommodation/short stay accommodation on the rental market, examining innovative ways to deliver affordable housing such as build to rent schemes and how to provide key worker housing. This will require partnerships between the private and public sector.

A very specific solution is that the State government could implement reforms to allow additional charges for short stay accommodation sites, like other jurisdictions in Australia (Brisbane, Noosa, Port Douglas) that impact liveability and the ability to accommodate population changes over the long term and increase the rating equity between commercial zones and commercial operations. Examples such as the recent attempts by Hobart City to address the impacts of short stay accommodation highlight the wider need for this, with

⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212420921006324>

⁶ <https://www.bitre.gov.au/national-cities-performance-framework/hobart>

locations such as Venice providing real examples of impacts for residents because of this sector.

Liveable communities

While the paper recognises a link between wellbeing and liveability, it does not identify how this will inform and be integrated across Government and with the strategic and land use planning system.

Drawing on the recommendations of national PIA's initiative *The Tipping Point*, PIA's call for a National Settlement Strategy (which was subsequently endorsed by the Federal Government), clear strategies for managing and planning population growth are necessary for long-term growth and liveability outcomes.

Liveability is about where you are located and being close to everything you need for employment, learning, recreating, services etc, and the amenities that improve your enjoyment of life through your lifetime. Dr Julian Bolleter from the University of Western Australia has undertaken research into what people enjoy and value most. This will give some insights into aspects of liveability.

PIA submitted to the recent consultation on the TPPs that it is supportive of the need for a TPP addressing matters associated with planning for integrated communities. Planning for sustainable and integrated communities should result in inclusive communities, and accessibility is a core element of this.

PIA believes that liveable communities should reflect an aspiration for being integrated and well-planned and in a submission to the State Planning Office have recommended that the relevant TPP should be rebadged to '**Sustainable and integrated communities**' to align the stated intention that the TPPs are to be consistent with international agreements and goals on the creation of sustainable communities.

Consideration of urban design and neighbourhood character is often absent in the strategies and objectives of planning policy documents and should be directly incorporated into policy and implementation plans. If we are to provide for a range of alternative housing options, in some areas these will need to be denser than our traditional suburban development. It is paramount that this is provided in quality urban environments. For example, strategies such as the Greater Hobart Plan provide for densification areas. There needs to be a conversation about the community about what change looks like, highlighting the positive aspects and the benefits.

Designing and planning services to improve liveability

This could be achieved by having a clear recognition in the strategy of the critical linkage between the TPPs and their implementation through the regional land use strategies, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and Local Provisions Schedules, including the critical role that land use planning plays in many of Government strategies related to land use, strategic policy and liveability within Tasmania and for Tasmanians.

It is essential to establish clear linkages between strategic goals, implementation methods and reporting of progress/monitoring implementation against milestones at all these spatial levels.

It is also important to identify clear expectations and limitations on the use of public funds in implementing policy and to look at innovative funding solutions. Unhealthy competitive mindsets need to be reviewed and replaced with cooperation and collaboration ones (where possible). Further, barriers that disincentivise collaboration should be identified by involving private sector in partnerships and solutions rather than always looking to regulatory solutions.

A very specific policy position is to establish clear community and land use policy around how ageing in place will be delivered in local communities and in lifestyle and care-based facilities, including how they integrate into the local setting, the required infrastructure for lifestyle or aged care sites (such as: lifestyle options, locational requirements around slope, walkability, proximity to essential services, shops, public transport)

The effects of inadequate infrastructure and services

In some situations, the demand for infrastructure and services in Tasmania outstrips supply, with finite resources to provide or improve critical infrastructure and services, some of it that is now at end of life. This infrastructure needs to address future needs for essential services such as health, housing, and transport.

Improved integrated infrastructure planning is required should ensure that the growth and development of settlements is planned in a manner that provides for logical provision and maintenance of infrastructure including localised utilities for new settlements, needs for education, culture, health, as well as social and community facilities. As part of this, the developer contributions legislative framework must be revised to provide effective funding for the necessary infrastructure. This should not be limited to physical/reticulated infrastructure but can be extended to social and community infrastructure and other elements such as improved urban design, recreation, open space and transport if there is a clear link (nexus) between the infrastructure, the residents and the development. Barriers to releasing land because a particular developer does not want to 'go first' and bear the initial costs of land release should be investigated and overcome.

State and Federal governments should identify and fund critical infrastructure that limits delivery of housing and their impact of economic expansion of local industries within remote and isolated areas, such as waste management and sewerage.

Without infrastructure and services that cater to young people's needs, existing interstate or overseas migration trends are likely to increase as they search for better career opportunities and/or living conditions, leaving an important gap in the Tasmanian economy and social fabric.

A specific infrastructure issue arises because we know that climate change is going to increase the frequency and intensity of episodic storm events, and that increased overland flow in Tasmania has been poorly prepared for. As part of effective settlement planning, we need to increase the uptake of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD), such as by incorporating requirements in the State Planning Provisions for on-site detention and use of WSUD treatments.

Effective and well-resourced active transport public transport systems and are required, initially within and between urban areas, to address existing transport problems and improve accessibility between areas.

Delivering innovative housing solutions

Various data and reports suggest current financial and tax strategies that commodify housing are increasing affordability and availability problems within Tasmania and across Australia. Housing is a fundamental human right, which questions why should governments continue to focus primarily on delivering or financing traditional market-based housing. While this might address the current housing crisis, it does not deal with the broader structural problems within the housing system and contributes to fuelling housing prices.

Governments must play a more active role in looking for solutions outside the market and facilitating the delivery of these solutions, particularly around de-risking alternative housing models.

The provision of flexible and responsive models for key worker housing will require review of existing strategic and statutory planning arrangements and mechanisms.

Arrangements for funding and housing delivery partners will require ongoing improvements.


Fostering collaboration among different actors

Positive liveability outcomes can be achieved by improving tangible and intangible elements of a space. However, this is not always feasible due to limited resources of both State and local governments. Collaboration among different actors is a significant opportunity to achieve greater economies of scale and efficiency through more effective resource allocation and sharing.

An improved strategic policy framework is an imperative – having State and Federal Governments establish clear outcomes for policy interventions on key issues such as housing availability/ affordability/suitability, public transport, disaster/natural hazard management, climate change adaption, particularly around implementing structural change various sectors to reflect the needs of the changing community. This will likely require strategic policy interventions to affect change, such as initiatives that de-risk the finance and investment processes for different forms of housing and delivery models.

We thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. If you would like to discuss this submission further with PIA, please contact me on 0418 597997.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MP', with a long, flowing horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Purves

President

Planning Institute of Australia, Tasmanian Division