

THE URBAN COALITION



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Focus on Cities in New Deal

A coalition of leading built environment groups is calling for a new Federal Government department focussed on ensuring quality strategic planning for the future of our cities.

The Urban Coalition today launched a plan to meet the emerging urban challenges and improve our cities' livability.

The plan, *A New Deal for Urban Australia*, calls for leadership and investment and recommends the establishment of an Urban Infrastructure Fund to meet a backlog of more than \$500bn in infrastructure needs for Australian cities and to better manage population growth.

"We need to access both national and international savings and direct them to fund productivity-boosting urban infrastructure – such as public transport interchanges, removing pinch points on local road and freight networks, as well as the community facilities that make cities work more efficiently" Property Council Chief Executive, Peter Verwer, said..

UDIA National President Julie Katz said there is a real shortage of adequate funding in growth areas right around Australia resulting in people travelling long distances between home and work.

"The longer the distances between home and work the greater the difficulties and congestion in our cities," Ms Katz said. "The key to a *New Deal for Urban Australia* is getting better infrastructure funding for new growth areas."

Supporting the Urban Infrastructure Fund, the Urban Coalition is calling for a stronger role for Infrastructure Australia and the establishment of the Department for Cities and Urban Development.

Chief Executive Officer of the Planning Institute of Australia, Kirsty Kelly said Infrastructure Australia has provided independent advice to governments, investors and owners of infrastructure for the past five years and there is now an opportunity to build on its success.

"If we strengthen the roles of Infrastructure Australia and the Major Cities Unit we can ensure taxpayers and investors get the best possible return on every dollar invested in infrastructure by the government," Ms Kelly said.

"The governance overseeing Infrastructure Australia should be refined to better align with National Urban Policy and improve coordination with state and territory governments."

The *New Deal for Urban Australia* is needed to tackle the new challenges faced by cities in the 21st century.

Executive Officer of the National Growth Areas Alliance, Ruth Spielman, said more than 80 per cent of Australia's population now live in cities and people in fast growing outer suburbs want basic requirements within reach.

"People need jobs and services closer to home and improved transport options," Ms Spielman said. "Strategic investment will provide opportunities for these residents, contribute to better functioning cities and boost national productivity."

Green Building Council of Australia Federal Advocacy Manager, Katy Dean, said that city policy must be prioritised by the Federal Government to ensure more strategic planning of our cities and regions.

"Innovative models that drive infrastructure investment based on positive outcomes can help our communities to reach high benchmarks for liveability, prosperity and sustainability," Ms Dean said.

Consult Australia Chief Executive, Megan Motto, said a *New Deal for Urban Australia* clearly identifies the opportunity for governments to work in partnership with investors to capitalise on the latent value in our cities.

"With smart investments in infrastructure the benefits for national productivity, urban amenity and our collective standard of living are huge," Ms Motto said.

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