

ADI Residents Action Group
PO Box 4134
WERRINGTON NSW 2747

Monday, 29 November 2004

The Hon Craig Knowles
Minister for Planning and Natural Resources

SUBMISSION: SYDNEY METROPOLITAN STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER

The ADI Residents Action Group (ADI RAG) wishes to make comment on aspects of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper.

ADI RAG was formed in 1993 in response to plans for urban and industrial development of the former ADI Site St Marys. ADI RAG has attempted to achieve the best possible environmental and social outcome for Western Sydney by actively and democratically participating in the planning process governed primarily by the NSW Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Our experience has shown that planning and development outcomes are generally determined in advance of considerations for the protection of the natural environment or the overall public interest.

Governments at all levels have become entrepreneurs and businesses with ideologies and agendas developed solely to drive economic growth. For government enterprises to succeed they must form relationships with private sector interests such as property developers and their advocates. It is not surprising to see interdependent relationships form between governments and property developers as governments are attempting to reduce public expenditure by making the private sector pay and the development sector needs planning approval to allow their ventures to profit.

It is our experience that when governments and business elites have formed interdependent relationships, planning outcomes are made in favour of these powerful groups that allow them to financially profit or achieve other benefits. Basically, the system is corrupted to achieve the agenda of the government and its business partners.

The NSW Government must acknowledge that this is an overwhelming view of the community and with good reason.

This direction of this Discussion Paper appears to be have been heavily driven by private sector groups whose interests have been addressed ahead of that of the general public and the protection of the natural environment. The natural environment appears to be merely a constraint to the government and the business sector. Recent proposed amendments to the Planning Act and changes to Threatened Species legislation reinforce this opinion.

Comments and Suggestions

- § There is no option to maintain our current population and improve on what we already have. Many would argue that Sydney couldn't cope with further growth that we are already at our environmental limits.
- § There are no discussions about options for decentralisation
- § There are no specifics about providing public transport to new Greenfield sites.
- § There appears to be have been no community consultation asking residents of the so called 'growth centres' if they want this for their community. There has been no such consultation with Penrith residents.
- § The proposal to allow the development lobby to coordinate the development of new Greenfield sites through 'Development Corporations' is not supported. This would further add to the public perception that developers are running the NSW planning department.
- § Private Development Agreements although not mentioned in this paper are not supported. They can become messy legal documents that bind the government and lock in a development outcome.
- § Current vegetation mapping by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation is inadequate and erroneous. This plan should not be implemented until fresh mapping of the existing native vegetation in Sydney is completed.
- § All surplus government lands are potential sites for urban development. A comprehensive assessment of all publicly owned land should be done before this plan is implemented. The Federal Governments 2003 review of surplus Commonwealth properties in Western Sydney over 5 hectares appears inadequate as it was based on DEC vegetation mapping.
- § The development of riparian and native vegetation policies and measures that ensure the long-term protection of all significant native species and ecological communities.
- § An undertaking that development in Sydney will not exceed the region's capacity to handle increased infrastructure due to salinity and water management constraints.
- § Catchment management and flooding issues need to be considered for the South Creek Valley before proceeding with major new urban releases in this area.

Yours truly,



Geoff Brown
Convenor
ADI Residents Action Group