

LGNSW SUBMISSION

A new approach to strategic planning

FEBRUARY 2026



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Recommendations

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That the NSW Government commit to a collaborative approach to strategic land use planning that appropriately recognises councils' statutory responsibilities and enables councils to strike the right balance between their locally developed plans supported by infrastructure and the higher-level State and regional land use plans.

Recommendation 2:

That the NSW Government publicly exhibit the draft State Land Use Plan to allow councils and communities to review and comment on how statewide priorities and long-term infrastructure commitments will be applied in practice.

Recommendation 3:

That the NSW Government ensure the three-tier structure sets clear strategic direction, includes a two-way feedback process to inform ongoing adjustments and enables councils to design and implement actions flexibly at the local level.

Recommendation 4:

That the NSW Government adopt a whole-of-state approach to population growth to strengthen the new three-tier planning framework by including targeted policies in the State Land Use Plan that guide how growth is actively planned and distributed across regions throughout the state.

Recommendation 5:

The State Land Use Plan and region plans must provide a genuine, forward looking 20-year strategic vision, supported by clear long-term housing and infrastructure direction, transparent integration of land use and infrastructure planning, and explicit reference to the evidence base and technical studies that underpin the plans.

Recommendation 6:

The responses and actions in the region plans should be well-defined so that they align with the priorities and can be easily measured and reported against.

Recommendation 7:

Effective delivery and tracking of region plans will be enhanced by structured and ongoing collaboration between State and local government and a robust implementation framework.

Recommendation 8:

That the NSW Government clarify the expected scale and timing of LSPS changes - including the proposal to integrate with the IP&R framework - and commit specific targeted resourcing to support councils to update their LSPS and implement these changes within realistic timeframes.

Recommendation 9:

The State Land Use Plan and region plans must provide clearer direction about responsibilities for infrastructure planning and sequencing, including how these functions will be coordinated with State, regional and local land use planning under the new framework.

Recommendation 10:

The NSW Government can support councils to deliver their responsibilities under this model by providing targeted support through improving local infrastructure funding, streamlining planning proposal processes, increasing strategic planning resourcing, and assisting councils to develop affordable housing contribution schemes.

Recommendation 11:

That the NSW Government retains the current regional planning boundaries and commits to resourcing delivery of region plans that allow for tailored, place-based planning, instead of grouping 84 diverse councils into one region.

Recommendation 12:

That DPHI accelerates and clearly outlines its review of the LSPS framework to strengthen and clarify its role in translating the new strategic planning framework at the local level.

Recommendation 13:

That the NSW Government considers the merits of introducing the following additional priorities to framework: food production and security, heritage, sustainability, inclusion and health and safety.

Recommendation 14:

That the NSW Government adopt regional implementation arrangements with formal council representation to review progress, identify risks and update actions, ensuring that statewide priorities translate into practical outcomes.

Opening

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on the *A New Approach to Strategic Planning: Discussion Paper* (the *Discussion Paper*)¹.

Historically, councils have been and remain strong supporters and essential partners in implementing regional and metropolitan plans and strategies across NSW. Councils bring essential local knowledge, experience and fine-grain planning capability that are critical to meeting the challenges of a growing population across the state. The local government sector therefore plays a critical role in the State's future strategic land use planning.

LGNSW welcomes the NSW Government's renewed focus on strategic planning signalled by the Discussion Paper. Councils seek to work together with the State Government to implement strategic plans that can prepare and provide for growth. However, there is a concern that the proposed approach lacks strategic direction, with broad gaps in supporting studies across the draft Plan and insufficient detail on how long-term infrastructure investment needs will be identified and sequenced to align with future growth.

Councils have also identified the need for a structured 'bottom-up' feedback loop as part of implementation and monitoring of the region and local plans. The submission also highlights concerns about the proposal to merge 84 local government areas (LGAs) into a single 'region', noting that such broad boundaries cannot adequately capture the distinct planning contexts, growth pressures and community needs across different regional locations in NSW.

This submission provides feedback and proposes constructive, collaborative solutions in response to the NSW Government's proposed new framework for strategic land use planning, as outlined in the Discussion Paper. The submission begins with some overarching comments to highlight councils' current issues and key positions, with the remainder of the submission structured to respond to the Discussion Paper feedback questions.

This submission is informed by the policy positions of LGNSW and consultation with NSW councils. This submission was endorsed by the LGNSW Board in April 2026.

¹ [A new approach to strategic planning | Planning](#)

Background

The Discussion Paper is a key element of a suite of three strategic planning documents concurrently on exhibition as part of the NSW Government's new approach to strategic planning across the state:

- ***A New approach to strategic planning: Discussion paper*** proposes a three-tiered strategic planning framework and introduces a new State Land Use Plan and 7 statewide priorities to guide land use planning across NSW.
- **The Sydney Plan** is the first of the new regional strategic plans in the proposed framework and is being positioned to demonstrate how the new statewide approach will be applied at a regional scale.
- **The Draft Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands** outlines how industrial lands will be planned, managed, and categorised in NSW.

LGNSW has provided separate submissions on each of these proposals.

The Discussion Paper outlines a proposed three-tier structure - state, region and local - with a new State Land Use Plan that would set seven statewide land use priorities to guide planning at every level. The Discussion Paper outlines the following elements that make up the proposed framework:

1. **Three tiers - State, Region, Local** - A single framework to replace overlapping layers
2. **State Land Use Plan with seven priorities** - Priorities that set statewide direction and cascade through regional and local planning.
3. **Cascading priorities** - Ways the priorities could shape regional strategies and local planning instruments.
4. **Roles and responsibilities**
 - State: sets priorities and policy direction
 - Region: translates state direction into spatial strategies and sequencing
 - Local: delivers outcomes on the ground through zoning, housing, infrastructure and local plans.
5. **Delivery through local plans** - Strengthening the role of local plans as the key tool for delivering housing, jobs, infrastructure and resilience.
6. **Future updates to the framework** - Opportunities to further simplify and align the strategic planning framework.

The NSW Government would like feedback on whether its proposed new three-tiered structure and the way it is proposed to operate, will provide an effective basis for guiding strategic land use planning across NSW. The Discussion Paper invites feedback on:

- how these elements should operate in practice, including how priorities cascade through regional and local plans,
- how roles are defined,
- how delivery can be strengthened through local plans, and
- opportunities to simplify the framework.

Role of local government in strategic planning

Councils are a critical partner in the State's land use planning framework and perform many activities in planning for the needs of their local communities and the broader state of NSW. Their strategic land use planning role includes both statutory responsibilities, required by legislation, and non-statutory activities that support strategic local development.

Within the statutory planning framework, councils prepare and apply Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS), which guide zoning and set a 20-year land use vision aligned with State and regional priorities. They also prepare infrastructure contributions plans in accordance with a framework governed by State legislation, ministerial directions and mandatory practice notes, which determine what infrastructure can be funded, how costs must be justified, and how contribution rates must be calculated.

Councils also have a statutory role to assess development applications (DAs), and in many LGAs decisions on significant applications are made by Local Planning Panels of independent experts rather than the elected council. In addition to their responsibilities under planning legislation, councils must also operate within the State's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework to ensure strategic and accountable governance under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Beyond these mandated responsibilities, NSW councils undertake non-statutory planning activities such as preparing local housing strategies to identify future housing needs, and engaging their communities to develop broader strategies (such as for open space and recreation, community infrastructure and economic development) that, while not required by law, strengthen local planning and community outcomes.

Through these roles and responsibilities, councils are key delivery partners in planning for and accommodating the State's growth.

Recommendation 1:

That the NSW Government commit to a collaborative approach to strategic land use planning that appropriately recognises councils' statutory responsibilities and enables councils to strike the right balance between their locally developed plans supported by infrastructure and the higher-level State and regional land use plans.

LGNSW Position

LGNSW wants to see a strategic planning system that allows councils to lead locally, ensures growth is supported with the right infrastructure at the right time, and brings all levels of government together in a genuine partnership. Core LGNSW positions² that underpin this objective are:

Local government is best placed to lead and influence local and regional planning processes according to the needs and expectations of local communities.

Our communities' quality of life is a priority of local government planning.

State and Commonwealth Government growth plans and projects must make upfront provision for, and ensure efficient and streamlined delivery of, associated local infrastructure.

From a local government perspective, LGNSW highlights the following key strategic planning priorities:

- **Genuine collaboration between all spheres of government to address the housing and homelessness crisis** - Effective planning and housing solutions require genuine collaboration between federal, state and local governments.
- **Enabling infrastructure** - Growth must be matched with timely infrastructure delivery. Plans and provisions must include the funding and timely delivery of both state and local infrastructure needed to support increased density³.
- **Local infrastructure contributions reform** - Work to resolve major funding shortfalls for local infrastructure is urgently needed and has remained so for more than a decade. Councils resolved in 2025 to call for the infrastructure contributions framework to be strengthened to enable councils to support increased demands on infrastructure from growth and intensification of development in NSW⁴.
- **Local flexibility and autonomy within the broader framework** - Council-led place-based strategic planning with flexibility to adapt to local community needs and conditions.
- **Affordable housing targets** - Set minimum targets of 10 per cent social and affordable housing across NSW and continue the commitment for at least 30 per cent on government-owned land⁵.

² [LGNSW Policy Platform](#) (Fundamental Principles D & E and Policy Position 3.2)

³ [LGNSW Policy Platform](#) (7.3(b))

⁴ [LGNSW 2025 Annual Conference Resolutions](#) (Resolution 3)

⁵ [LGNSW Policy Platform](#) (8.1(e))

Overview of proposed strategic planning framework

The Discussion Paper invites feedback on whether the proposed three-tiered structure and the new State Land Use Plan will provide an effective basis for guiding strategic land use planning across NSW. Broadly, LGNSW welcomes the intent of continuing a clearer hierarchy of plans, with statewide priorities informing regional strategies and local plans.

While LGNSW supports the introduction of a single statewide plan, its absence from the exhibition package makes it difficult to assess how the proposed priorities will operate in practice or how long-term infrastructure commitments will be aligned with future growth areas. Councils' feedback is that the framework presented in the Discussion Paper – even with the draft Sydney Plan as an example exhibited alongside it – lacks the necessary detail to understand how the statewide priorities will translate into practical, measurable actions on the ground, and how enabling infrastructure will be funded and sequenced to support growth. Councils and communities require an opportunity to review and comment on the draft State Land Use Plan to ensure it can be translated into practical, implementable outcomes at the regional and local levels.

To be effective, councils seek a model that provides clear and measurable State and regional direction while supporting locally responsive, flexible implementation and incorporating a strong two-way feedback loop to inform ongoing adjustments.

More broadly, LGNSW has long advocated for a genuinely whole-of-state approach to strategic planning – one that takes a long term view and actively seeks to diversify and better distribute growth across NSW. This requires stronger rural and regional services, deliberate decentralisation, supporting infrastructure, and targeted economic development. There is an opportunity to strengthen the new framework by purposefully adopting a whole-of-state approach to managing population growth and embedding targeted policies in the State Land Use Plan to guide how growth is actively planned for and distributed across all regions throughout the State.

Recommendation 2:

That the NSW Government publicly exhibit the draft State Land Use Plan to allow councils and communities to review and comment on how statewide priorities and long-term infrastructure commitments will be applied in practice.

Recommendation 3:

That the NSW Government ensure the three-tier structure sets clear strategic direction, includes a two-way feedback process to inform ongoing adjustments and enables councils to design and implement actions flexibly at the local level.

Recommendation 4:

That the NSW Government adopt a whole-of-state approach to population growth to strengthen the new three-tier planning framework by including targeted policies in the State

Land Use Plan that guide how growth is actively planned and distributed across regions throughout the state.

Feedback on proposed strategic planning framework

The Discussion Paper contains a series of feedback questions which are addressed below.

Need for change

This section responds to chapter 5 of the Discussion Paper.

Barriers and challenges

What barriers do you encounter in the current land use planning framework?

Key challenges consistently cited by councils:

- **Restrictions on local infrastructure funding** – Unindexed contribution caps introduced in 2012, combined with complex infrastructure contributions planning, continue to restrict councils’ ability to fund the local infrastructure needed to support population growth.
- **Planning proposal delays** – Councils frequently report long delays in the planning proposal process, with a lengthy and complicated process and timeframes between developing strategies/plans through to rezoning land, including some delays waiting for DPHI and state agencies to progress their input on planning proposals. Councils would be pleased to contribute practical solutions towards improving the planning proposal and other strategic planning processes.
- **Resourcing constraints and diversions** – Councils face funding and staffing constraints that reduce councils’ strategic planning capacity. Additional grants would help them deliver required local actions in region plans.
- **Developing affordable housing contributions schemes** – Many councils have progressed development of affordable housing contribution schemes but have found that the NSW Government’s overly complex framework for establishing these schemes has delayed their finalisation and establishment in many areas.
- **Scope, scale, and pace of planning reform** – Councils’ limited planning resources are being diverted from long-term strategic work to managing and responding to increasing numbers of speculative proposals, state significant developments and a continual stream of planning reforms. This includes time spent having to explain state policies and reforms to applicants and the local community.
- **Complexity and insufficient review of State planning policy documents** – Many State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) have been introduced over decades without any built-in review or monitoring to measure effectiveness and impact. Councils report that these policies often work at cross purposes, add

complexity, do not always deliver their intended outcomes and can lead to poor planning outcomes. Greater evaluation of SEPP impacts and effectiveness – and support for councils to develop locally appropriate responses – is needed to improve housing diversity, affordability and supply.

State Land Use Plan and local decision making

How could the State Land Use Plan shape or support local planning and decision-making?

Strategic vision - With their 20-year planning horizon, the State Land Use Plan and region plans should set the long-term vision and strategic direction that guides major infrastructure decisions and anticipated population growth.

However, without seeing the actual draft State Land Use Plan, it is unclear whether the NSW Government's proposed 20-year strategic planning framework will genuinely provide long-term direction. Councils have noted that the example shown through the draft Sydney Plan⁶ mostly reflects existing policies and short-term decisions, not a forward-looking 20-year strategy.

(By way of example, the draft Sydney Plan only provides 5-year housing targets, with no direction for 10- or 20-years. It requires councils to update their local plans to incorporate the housing targets, but the 2024-29 target timeframe will be almost over before the planning proposal process to review and update these plans is complete. For local planning to be supported, councils needed longer term direction and certainty beyond 5-year timeframes.)

While the Discussion Paper contends that the proposed approach builds in flexibility to respond to change, councils caution that this new framework risks becoming reactive rather than strategic. Presenting short-term decisions as long-term strategy reduces both transparency and strategic clarity, creating greater uncertainty for all stakeholders.

From councils' perspective, the risks include:

- Weaker alignment between State, regional and local plans, making it harder for councils to update local strategies.
- Poor integration between land use and infrastructure, potentially compromising key statewide priorities of 'Connected' and 'Coordinated'.
- Reduced accountability, with unclear measurable long-term outcomes to track progress.
- Continuation of existing development trends rather than planned, balanced growth and distribution of population and services across NSW.

Integrated land use and infrastructure - The Discussion Paper proposes a deliberate shift from the current approach - where regional plans seek to align land use, transport and infrastructure planning - to a framework where the State and region plans are deliberately limited to being land-use-only plans.

⁶ [The Sydney Plan | Planning](#)

Councils stress that planning must be infrastructure-led, with early and upfront investment in the critical infrastructure needed to support population and housing growth.

Housing should be integrated with infrastructure and services which are vital to create functioning healthy and liveable communities, and for ensuring social licence for growth and greater density. This includes public transport, health and education facilities, local roads, pedestrian and cycle networks, local water, sewerage and stormwater facilities, parks, recreation, cultural and community services facilities and a high-quality public domain. Contemporary community expectations are that these essential services and facilities will be available when residents move into an area.

The Discussion Paper notes that region plans will “guide the sequencing of development and infrastructure delivery” and “align growth with infrastructure provision”. However, councils seek greater clarity on how this new land-use-plan-only framework will integrate with the relevant state agencies’ infrastructure planning and investment.

Supporting documents and evidence base - In a similar way that local plans and strategies are supported with an evidence base of strategic and technical studies that inform the preparation of the planning proposal, so too, the State Land Use Plan (and region plans) should provide explicit reference to supporting information and a detailed evidence base that underpins these plans and the assumptions on which they are based.

Recommendation 5:

The State Land Use Plan and region plans must provide a genuine, forward looking 20-year strategic vision, supported by clear long-term housing and infrastructure direction, transparent integration of land use and infrastructure planning, and explicit reference to the evidence base and technical studies that underpin the plans.

Tracking region plan actions and outcomes

What would make region plans more useful in driving action and tracking whether outcomes are achieved?

Driving action and tracking outcomes requires region plan responses and actions to be clear, measurable and easy to review and report against. Without well-defined and measurable actions - developed in collaboration with councils - councils cannot be confident about what they are expected to deliver. The draft Sydney Plan illustrates this issue, with several actions that councils consider difficult to measure or monitor (for example, uncertainty over how to interpret “sufficient *feasible* capacity” versus “*theoretical* capacity”⁷). This risks the plans being ineffective and progress hard to monitor and assess.

Strengthening the clarity and measurability of actions is therefore essential to making region plans practical, transparent and effective.

⁷ [The Sydney Plan | Planning Portal - Department of Planning and Environment](#), p 44

As discussed later in this submission, successful delivery and tracking of both the Statewide Land Use Plan and region plans relies on structured, ongoing collaboration between State and local government and a robust implementation framework.

Recommendation 6:

The responses and actions in the region plans should be well-defined so that they align with the priorities and can be easily measured and reported against.

Recommendation 7:

Effective delivery and tracking of region plans will be enhanced by structured and ongoing collaboration between State and local government and a robust implementation framework.

Proposed new framework

This section responds to chapter 6 of the Discussion Paper.

Structure, roles and responsibilities

Does the proposed structure provide enough clarity on who is responsible for planning and implementation at each tier?

The Discussion Paper outlines the broad roles and responsibilities of each tier (State, regional and local), with the draft Sydney Plan example illustrating that the responsibilities for delivery of actions at each level are largely assigned to either DPHI or councils.

Local planning responsibilities – The Discussion Paper proposes strengthened local implementation through LSPs linked to the NSW Government’s IP&R framework. Councils welcome the principle of stronger local planning but emphasise that any new framework must not introduce or transfer additional unfunded responsibilities without commensurate support. Councils are supportive of the opportunity to update and align their LSPs with the new strategic planning framework. However, detail is needed about the timing and scale of the changes expected and what resourcing support will be provided, particularly for those councils facing significant growth or where they lack planning resources.

Infrastructure responsibilities – The Discussion Paper does not clearly explain how responsibilities for infrastructure sequencing will be integrated into a land-use-only planning approach. The timely sequencing and funding of enabling infrastructure is integral to land use planning decisions. Greater transparency is needed about the role of infrastructure delivery agencies, how these responsibilities interact, and how they will be coordinated across State, regional and local planning processes.

Recommendation 8:

That the NSW Government clarify the expected scale and timing of LSPS changes - including the proposal to integrate with the IP&R framework - and commit specific targeted resourcing to support councils to update their LSPS and implement these changes within realistic timeframes.

Recommendation 9:

The State Land Use Plan and region plans must provide clearer direction about responsibilities for infrastructure planning and sequencing, including how these functions will be coordinated with State, regional and local land use planning under the new framework.

Council support

What further support would councils or agencies need to deliver their responsibilities under this model?

To fulfil their responsibilities under this model, councils seek ongoing support to overcome constraints in infrastructure funding, planning proposal delays, limited resourcing, and difficulties in establishing affordable housing contribution schemes.

LGNSW and councils would welcome support in the following areas:

- **Improved local infrastructure funding**, through both the direct provision of critical enabling infrastructure and reviewing infrastructure contribution caps and other limitations in the local contributions framework.
- **Funding and resourcing for strategic planning**, including grants to prepare and maintain planning documents, strategies, and evidence bases. Targeted support for councils to deliver local actions can be provided through programs such as the Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund⁸ and past State government funding to accelerate LEP updates⁹.
- **More efficient planning proposal processes**, with a commitment from the NSW Government to work with councils on practical improvements.
- **Assistance in developing affordable housing contribution schemes**, to overcome current complexity and delays, as well as direct funding support to assist councils to develop these schemes.

⁸ [Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund | Planning](#)

⁹ In 2018, the Accelerated LEP Review Program provided \$2.5m in funding for councils to review and update their LEP to reflect direction in the higher-level region plan.

Recommendation 10:

The NSW Government can support councils to deliver their responsibilities under this model by providing targeted support through improving local infrastructure funding, streamlining planning proposal processes, increasing strategic planning resourcing, and assisting councils to develop affordable housing contribution schemes.

Regional planning boundaries

Do the proposed regional planning boundaries make sense for how infrastructure and growth are planned and delivered in your part of NSW?

The Discussion Paper proposes amalgamating 84 LGAs into a single “region”, replacing the seven current planning regions of the Central West, Far West, Riverina Murray, North Coast, New England North West, and parts of the South East and Tablelands and the Hunter.

LGNSW does not support the proposal to radically change regional planning boundaries. A single “region” encompassing 84 councils is too broad to support effective planning; it cannot reflect the vastly different local conditions and communities across NSW.

Beyond the administrative convenience of producing one region plan rather than seven, the Discussion Paper fails to demonstrate why this approach would improve planning or deliver better outcomes. A one-size-fits-all region covering most of the State would be unworkable and ineffective because it cannot respond to the fundamentally different planning contexts, growth pressures, natural hazards, economies and infrastructure needs across NSW. NSW would benefit from a strategic planning framework that recognises regional diversity rather than obscures it.

Treating this vast expanse of NSW as one region removes the ability to effectively:

- **Plan for different growth dynamics** (e.g. high-growth coastal councils compared with slower growth or declining inland populations)
- **Address different economic drivers** (e.g. Northern Rivers tourism and agribusiness compared with infrastructure needs of Central West mining and other renewable energy zone (REZ) locations)
- **Respond to different environmental and hazard contexts** (e.g. flood-prone Northern Rivers compared with drought-affected Far-West, Riverina, Upper Murray, Central Tablelands and parts of the Hunter Valley)
- **Tailor infrastructure delivery to regional needs** (e.g. transport, utilities, social infrastructure requirements that differ significantly across regions)
- **Reflect differing community expectations and local conditions** - A land use planning framework must reflect the regional context and cannot be meaningfully applied across a state as diverse as NSW.

Recommendation 11:

That the NSW Government retains the current regional planning boundaries and commits to resourcing delivery of region plans that allow for tailored, place-based planning, instead of grouping 84 diverse councils into one region.

Delivering priorities at the local level

How can the framework make sure that State and regional priorities are delivered locally, through plans that directly shape housing, jobs and infrastructure outcomes?

Local planning remains a significant part of implementing the State's priorities and meeting the needs of local communities. Councils are central to translating high-level priorities into zoning, infrastructure planning and place-based strategies, but as discussed throughout this submission, this can only occur effectively if the framework is supported by clear direction while enabling councils to tailor implementation to local conditions.

Genuine engagement, shared evidence and consistent implementation support are essential to ensuring that councils are well-informed, on-board and resourced to translate State and regional priorities into practical local housing, jobs and infrastructure outcomes.

The Discussion Paper proposes co-designed improvements to the LSPS framework and stronger links to the IP&R framework. Together, these changes introduce a significant change and present a valuable opportunity to improve how councils translate State and regional plans into local outcomes.

Recommendation 12:

That DPHI accelerates and clearly outlines its review of the LSPS framework to strengthen and clarify its role in translating the new strategic planning framework at the local level.

Statewide priorities

Feedback is invited on whether these priorities are the right ones to guide land use planning across NSW.

Seven statewide priorities

The proposed framework includes seven statewide priorities, each with its own 'success statement', reproduced in the box below:

1. **Aboriginal Outcomes:** Embedding co-design to recognise Country in planning outcomes. Success means that land use plans recognise Country and custodianship to support use and benefit opportunities for Aboriginal landowners to achieve social, cultural, environmental and economic self-determination.
2. **Housed:** Delivering affordable, diverse housing in accessible locations. Success means more homes are built faster, close to jobs and transport.

3. **Prosperous:** Growing resilient, innovative economies. Success means land use decisions help create jobs, supports emerging and diverse industries, and strengthens supply chains.
4. **Connected:** Linking communities with efficient transport systems. Success means homes, jobs, and services are easier to reach and more accessible.
5. **Resilient:** Supporting a sustainable environment and biodiversity to help achieve net zero and build climate resilience. Success means communities can better withstand hazards and environmental pressures.
6. **Liveable:** Building vibrant places that support quality of life. Success means more public spaces, better urban design, and stronger social cohesion.
7. **Coordinated:** Aligning land use with infrastructure delivery. Success means major infrastructure investments directly support planned growth areas.

Source: [A new approach to strategic planning - Discussion Paper](#), p 33-34

LGNSW supports the concept of statewide priorities that provide high-level direction and are reflected through plans in each tier, to provide a line-of-sight between the three levels. Brief comments on each of the seven priorities are provided below.

1. **Aboriginal Outcomes:** More information is required to fully understand the implications of 'embedding co-design to recognise Country in planning outcomes'. While there is little information available, councils advise co-design requirements can extend planning timeframes, which would need to be factored in.
2. **Housed:** While this priority is supported, affordable housing is such a critical objective of the planning reforms that it should be included in the wording of the 'success statement' which, as presented currently only refers to measures of success that relate to the speed and location of housing delivery.
3. **Prosperous:** Councils remain cautious that the NSW Government's housing-led focus may compromise long-term planning for critical local industrial or employment lands. Recognition and protection of existing key industries should be explicitly referenced in this priority, to account for certain industries that may require protection from competing land uses and land use conflicts.
4. **Connected:** Councils have expressed concern about the lack of guaranteed state funding for the infrastructure required to support both the 'Connected' and 'Coordinated' priorities. Transport for NSW remains the responsible authority for planning and delivering major transport networks, guided by its own strategic plans and programs¹⁰. It is unclear how the new strategic planning framework will identify when and how land use and transport planning frameworks will or should interact and how the long-term planning and outcomes of DPHI, Transport for NSW and other State agencies will be coordinated to deliver this priority.
5. **Resilient:** It is unclear where the protection and management of natural resources (such as biodiversity and water quality) would fit in the seven priorities, and it is suggested that this priority be adjusted to reflect this aspect or alternatively have a new standalone priority.
6. **Liveable:** The success measure for this priority should also recognise places with attributes that contribute to the liveability of a region or locality that may be

¹⁰ [Transport strategies and plans | NSW Government](#)

what attracts people to them (such as places with a distinctive character, scenic value or heritage significance).

7. **Coordinated:** This priority is strongly supported and aligns with longstanding LGNSW advocacy for better coordination between land use planning and upfront infrastructure delivery throughout the strategic planning framework.

Councils would like to see more detail on how the statewide priorities will translate into on-the-ground planning requirements and what guidance will be provided to councils for this role.

Additional statewide priorities for consideration

Councils have also highlighted that the proposed priorities omit several important areas and LGNSW asks that these be given consideration as additional priorities or explicitly integrated into the existing statewide priorities:

- **Food production and security** – To reflect the importance of safeguarding food production, agricultural land and water security to support resilient communities and long-term sustainability.
- **Heritage** – To ensure that planning decisions recognise and protect the cultural, scenic and heritage values that shape local identity and community character.
- **Sustainability** – To emphasise the need to embed environmental sustainability, resource efficiency and long-term ecological resilience into all planning outcomes.
- **Inclusion** – To recognise the role of planning in supporting diverse, inclusive and culturally vibrant communities across NSW.
- **Health and safety** – To highlight the need for planning to support safe, healthy and liveable built environments through quality design, access to services, open space, active transport and community infrastructure.

Recommendation 13:

That the NSW Government considers the merits of introducing the following additional priorities to the statewide framework: food production and security, heritage, sustainability, inclusion and health and safety.

Updating, monitoring and adapting the framework

Update triggers

What types of triggers would make updates [to individual components (such as priorities, policy responses or technical appendices)] meaningful?

Updates should be triggered when new evidence emerges that materially affects planning assumptions. This could be the result of demographic shifts (e.g. confirmed population changes or updated forecasts following Census publication), major infrastructure commitments, changes in policy responses for managing natural hazard risks or major climatic events or natural disasters (e.g. bushfire or flood events) and new and emerging technologies.

Monitoring and implementing actions

How can monitoring drive real action?

A strategic planning framework can only remain effective if it is supported by structured, ongoing mechanisms that allow plans to be updated, monitored and adapted in a timely and coordinated way. A well-designed monitoring framework will strengthen accountability for implementing and regularly reviewing strategic land use planning documents. Meaningful updates, clear modular components, and effective monitoring all depend on an implementation system that embeds collaboration between State and local governments - not only during plan-making but throughout delivery.

The Discussion Paper itself highlights difficulties and challenges with the timely and effective implementation of earlier strategic plans. These shortcomings may have been in part due to weak or under-resourced implementation and monitoring frameworks, as well as governance changes affecting the regional planning framework for Greater Sydney¹¹. Without a strengthened and meaningful system to support implementation, tracking and review, the new strategic framework risks repeating the same challenges DPHI has identified in the current framework.

To make monitoring and implementation meaningful and effective, LGNSW recommends the NSW Government adopts a program-delivery approach through the establishment of regional implementation frameworks, with formal council representation involved in regular reviews of progress, reporting on actions, identifying delivery risks and updating roles and responsibilities as needed. Joint monitoring through the development of a shared State-local monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) framework (supported by shared data, clear indicators and regular reporting) would ensure progress is transparent and enable adjustments where actions are not delivering the intended outcomes.

¹¹ [By gutting the Greater Cities Commission, the NSW government is setting up for failure](#)

Flexibility and responsiveness

How can plans remain flexible and responsive?

Plans will remain flexible and responsive only if implementation is underpinned by structured, ongoing collaboration with local government. This means building in clear and genuine consultation protocols and transparent two-way feedback loops across all planning tiers to ensure council input is properly considered in updates.

In addition, routine State–local alignment ‘checkpoints’ within the LSPS and LEP review cycles would also help keep local plans consistent with State and regional priorities while allowing councils to tailor responses to local conditions.

In summary, a robust implementation framework is needed, that embeds councils in governance, alignment, engagement and monitoring processes throughout implementation. Together, these mechanisms would create an implementation framework that is adaptive, collaborative and based on councils’ direct experience and local knowledge - ensuring that statewide priorities translate into practical, achievable outcomes on the ground.

Recommendation 14:

That the NSW Government adopt regional implementation arrangements with formal council representation to review progress, identify risks and update actions, ensuring that statewide priorities translate into practical outcomes.

Conclusion

LGNSW welcomes the NSW Government’s intent to strengthen strategic land use planning across the State; councils recognise the importance of a clearer hierarchy of plans supported by long-term strategic direction. But they seek clarity, consistency and a genuine partnership to effectively deliver the State’s priorities on the ground.

This submission contains recommendations which include:

- a strong implementation and monitoring framework co-designed with councils;
- clear and improved infrastructure coordination;
- targeted support and resourcing for councils to fulfil their statutory and strategic roles; and
- retaining regionally meaningful planning boundaries.

Implementation of the new framework should go hand in hand with actions to address some of the practical barriers faced by councils. Some of the key challenges are highlighted in this submission. For councils to deliver local actions effectively, they will need targeted support through improved local infrastructure funding, streamlined planning proposal processes, increased strategic planning resourcing (including grants), and assistance to develop affordable housing contribution schemes.

More broadly, success of the new framework hinges on strong implementation, monitoring and governance arrangements. Previous strategic plans have not always fully achieved their objectives, which may reflect factors such as unclear and under resourced implementation pathways, varying levels of coordination across agencies, and incomplete monitoring processes.

This submission advocates that a robust program-delivery approach is needed, with clear responsibilities, measurable actions and structured State-local collaboration. Without these elements in place, the reforms risk replicating the same challenges identified in earlier strategic plans.