

31 March 2022

Submission on the Draft Western Parkland City Blueprint

Role of the Blueprint

Shelter NSW commends the Western Parkland Authority on the preparation of the Blueprint and the innovative, adaptable approach to long-term planning and coordination to leverage infrastructure investment. This process is an important shift in the delivery of large-scale precinct development.

Delivery Priorities

Although we have no issue with the jobs-led focus of the Blueprint, from the perspective of Shelter NSW, we are incredibly disappointed and concerned that housing is not considered a delivery priority. We note that the Place-based Infrastructure Compact for the Western Parkland City also did not address housing in great detail.

We recognise the reasoning for this provided during the online briefing session on 17 March, which is that the aim of the blueprint focused on rebalancing the jobs and infrastructure deficit in Western Sydney. We also recognise that Northwest and Southwest Sydney had absorbed the bulk of new greenfield development in the last 10 years. However, it is our view that housing as a non-negotiable priority fundamental to a coordinated planning outcome. That the Blueprint does not include any such priorities leads to Shelter to again observe a fundamental tension in the Government's otherwise laudable attempt to improve equity in Western Sydney. Given Minister Roberts' recently announced commitment to housing affordability, we hope to see this commitment reflected in the next iteration of the Blueprint.

Blueprint – Opportunities, Issues and Gaps

We note that the Western Parkland City will be delivering over 184,000 new homes. However, successfully delivering in a new city is not just about having enough housing, but having enough housing that is affordable for the lowest 40% of income earners (including low- or moderately-paid work, casual and part-time employment, or living on statutory incomes, and pensioners), including delivery of social and affordable housing. Low-income households are a critical workforce sector, but affordable rental housing in urban employment hubs is becoming increasingly difficult to access.

The Blueprint should include priorities that specifically address social and affordable housing. Shelter would like to see a more proactive commitments and actions to increase a quantifiable amount of social and affordable housing.

We wish to reiterate our position in the 2021 [submission](#) on the Place-based Infrastructure Compact for the Western Parkland City: the Western Parkland City is a once in a lifetime opportunity to plan a new city and ask why social and affordable housing is being excluded at a scale that is proportional to the growth envisioned. While the Blueprint rightly focuses on the opportunity to improve equity in Western Sydney by rebalancing the employment and infrastructure deficit, the creation of new jobs and investment in new industries requires the commensurate provision of non-market housing. Without such options, we would expect that high-value jobs located within the Western Parkland City will increase competition for market housing. As a result, we would further expect that essential workers on ordinary incomes will pay more than they can afford to live there or alternatively move further outside the envisioned ideal of a '30-minute city'.

Replicating the same model for housing in the Western Parkland City that we now rely on is likely to mean repeating market failures without active planning for social housing, affordable rental housing, and specialist housing, rendering it an unaffordable city for essential workers and people on ordinary incomes. The market has not proven itself capable of delivering affordability.

We wish to refer to some recent research that points to the critical role of affordable housing in unlocking the economic potential of employment precincts. This research shows that increasing the supply of affordable housing, particularly affordable rental options, is critical to the economic success of employment hubs.

A report prepared by AHURI, '[Urban productivity and affordable rental housing supply in Australian cities and regions](#)' (March 2021) found that lower income workers who play critical roles in urban economies are more likely to experience housing in these markets. These workers either endure affordability stress, commuting burdens, or both in order to access employment opportunities.

Another AHURI report from 2020, [‘Affordable housing in innovation-led employment strategies’](#) (August 2020), reviews nine international innovation districts to determine the role of affordable housing in these precincts. It stresses in no uncertain terms that housing is the foundation for successful innovation-led employment districts and maximising productivity. It found that a disconnect between innovation/ employment strategies and housing strategies was responsible for many of the issues and challenges facing innovation districts, their housing affordability and productivity, and that housing, especially affordable and diverse housing, should be an explicit consideration when preparing innovation-led employment strategies.