

Infrastructure Australia future city options highlight need for urban densities

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The Future Cities report by Infrastructure Australia highlights three options for Sydney's growth with the 'Centralised High Density' model demonstrating an emerging lifestyle for many Australians, says the Urban Taskforce.

"The report on the future form of Australian cities is an excellent contribution to the discussions of how growth will be accommodated in Sydney and Melbourne," says Urban Taskforce CEO, Chris Johnson. "The presentation of three options, a Low Density, High Density and Medium Density scenarios is a good way to focus on the way forward. The actual differences between these three options are not that great with the low density having 30% of new housing in greenfield areas, the medium density having 20% in greenfield and the high density having 10% in greenfield areas."

"Even in the low density scenario there will be 1.43 million new homes in Central Sydney compared to 1.52 million for medium density option and 1.65 million for the high density option. It seems that under all scenarios most of the new housing for Sydney will occur in infill sites in existing suburbs."

"Whether the infill is 70% (minimum) or 90% (maximum) it is clear that the existing suburbs of Sydney will have to change their character. The Urban Taskforce believes that centralised high density development around railway stations is the best way to accommodate new housing in existing suburbs. Under this model most of Sydney's existing low density suburbs will be retained as detached houses. A ring on medium density housing around the high density housing can provide a transition between the two urban forms."

"The high density approach will better support investment into metro rail infrastructure which will be necessary as the city grows. The Federal Government through Infrastructure Australia should focus financial incentives on the roll out of metro rail lines across Sydney and Melbourne with a requirement that high density development occurs around the stations."

"The reports focus on place-based planning that delivers liveable urban precincts particularly in the high density areas will be important."

"The 'Future Cities' report also highlights the dramatic shift underway in Sydney and Melbourne to urban living which has different characteristics to suburban living. The Urban Taskforce has recently undertaken research into Sydney's emerging urban lifestyles and an understanding of the demographics of those now preferring urban apartment living will be important for planning bodies."

The Urban Taskforce is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.

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