

20 June 2014

Elizabeth Kinkade,
Acting Director - Strategic Policy
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39,
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Kinkade,

Governance of the Greater Sydney Commission

Following our recent meeting where we discussed the possible role and structure of a Greater Sydney Commission I offered to forward some suggestions on the best way forward. The following comments provide a number of options and key principles that may be of assistance as you work towards formulating a structure for the Commission.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. The organisation must not simply add another layer of governance to an already complex planning system. The Commission must be focused on "doing" and "delivery", not just more planning. That is, the Commission must be seen by the property and development industry as a driver of housing, commercial, industrial and infrastructure across metropolitan Sydney.
2. The organisation must have key responsibilities in the areas of strategic planning, infrastructure provision and development assessment for State and Regionally significant projects (including a one stop shop for agency). The organisation would carry out the assessment of major development and then refer the assessment report to the JRPP or PAC for determination.
3. The organisation must coordinate the six subregional groupings of councils. In this regard, the Commission should begin the process of rationalising local government in metropolitan Sydney
4. The organisation must be accountable for its actions and be required to report annually on performance measured against clear delivery targets for housing, jobs and infrastructure provision.
5. The organisation must be an advocate for sustainable growth and pursue the delivery of development densities appropriate to location.
6. The organisation must have a clear relationship with other government agencies including the Department of Planning and Environment, Infrastructure NSW and UrbanGrowth NSW

NAME OF ORGANISATION

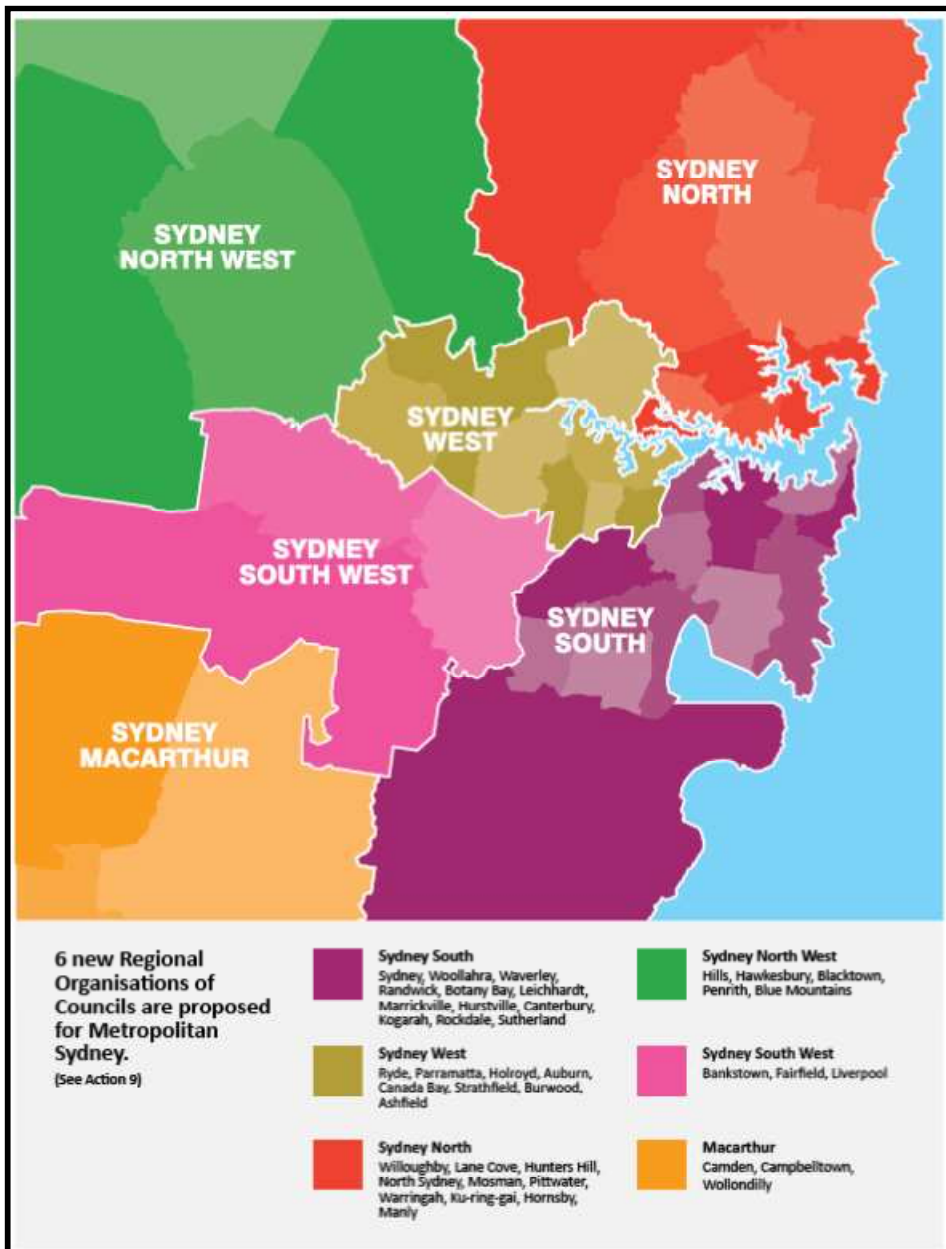
While we understand that you are in the early stages of developing an organisational structure of the Greater Sydney Commission, we believe the current name does not clearly define the role and activities of the organisation. We suggest alternative names such as: Sydney Planning Authority; Metropolitan Sydney Planning Board; Sydney Development Authority; or, Greater Sydney Growth Corporation.

STRUCTURAL OPTIONS

We have given some thought to the way that the organisation could be structured to ensure efficient and transparent decision making without losing sight of delivery.

OPTION 1

1. Establish six Regional Organisations of Councils across metropolitan. The Urban Taskforce recently released a publication that focused on reforming local government. While we did not argue for forced amalgamation, we do support regional groupings of councils, centres of excellence and shared service centres. The figure below shows our suggested groupings of councils.



2. Establish a Council of Mayors for each of the six Regional Organisations of Councils with an elected Chair.
3. Appoint a prominent private sector person as the Chair of the Board.
4. The Board to have the chair of each of the six Councils of Mayors, senior representatives of government agencies (Planning, Infrastructure, UrbanGrowth, Transport) and 2 private sector experts.
5. Appoint a CEO of the organisation.
6. Form Shared Service Centres within each of the Regional Organisations of Councils on a business like basis.
7. Establish a single Centre of Excellence for Planning for Metropolitan Sydney. The centre should be located in Parramatta and staffed from council and the Department of Planning and Environment. The Centre of Excellence for Planning would undertake Strategic Planning, Infrastructure Planning and assessment of State and Regionally significant projects.

OPTION 2

An alternative to the above could be the Minister for Planning to form a board. The Minister would appoint:

- a CEO for the organisation;
- five independent members (including a chairperson)
- the mayors of:
 - The City of Sydney;
 - The City of Parramatta; and
 - Sydney's largest councils in each of the north, the west, the south and the east regions. At present this would be Blacktown (West), Sutherland (South), Hornsby (North) and Randwick (East). However, this list would automatically change if councils amalgamated or grew. The advantage of having a fixed formula is that which mayors are to be included on the board would be clear and tied to size of local council.

I understand that the introduction of legislation to establish the Greater Sydney Commission is a possibility. If so, the legislation could provide that the various mayors automatically hold a position on the commission as part of their civic office.

Once the board has been formed the CEO would be able to develop a suitable structure for the organisation in consultation with the board and Minister for Planning.

The Urban Taskforce is not fully aware of the intricacies of the structure of various government departments and the above options are in the spirit of ensuring the new organisation has a strong leadership and delivery role. This will mean a significant change to the existing function of local councils and the Department of Planning and Environment. While change to local government and Department of Planning and Environment may be challenging, we argue that without these flow on changes the new organisation will be severely limited in authority and operation.

We believe the establishment of the new organisation must be the generator of reform of local government in Metropolitan Sydney. The government will need to determine the extent of legislative change that may be required, although we believe much of the proposal we have outlined can be accomplished within existing legislation. However, it would be a stronger statement if new legislation and corresponding changes to existing legislation, such as the Local Government Act were enacted.

I would be very keen to discuss these proposals in more detail and in the meantime, should you require any further clarification of the content of this correspondence, please feel free to contact me on telephone number 9238 3927.

Yours sincerely

Urban Taskforce Australia

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Johnson AM
Chief Executive Officer