

# National Planning Systems Principles

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Prepared by the Queensland Government



**LGPMC**  
Local Government and  
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# Executive summary

Planning systems throughout Australia face significant challenges in dealing with a range of complex social, economic and environmental issues in an increasingly technological and global environment.

While efficient, equitable and sustainable land use planning and infrastructure provision underpin the planning goals of each state and metropolitan region, the development of these plans and their implementation varies widely between states and territories.

A set of national planning systems principles would provide a framework to:

- enable the strategic role of planning to be better recognised and promoted at national, state, regional and local levels

- progress strategic planning system reform
- underpin strategic infrastructure investment—aligning budgetary, investment and planning decisions
- inform the development of appropriate governance structures.

There are three types of national planning systems principles:

- purpose principles—*why* we plan
- system principles—*how* we should plan
- issues principles—*what* issues or problems should be addressed through planning.

## Why we plan?

## Purpose principles

To facilitate and manage change in land use and the built environment in a way that contributes positively to the wellbeing of individuals and communities, and the natural and built environments on which they rely.

**Forms, patterns and legibility**—improve urban form, legibility and coherence to balance and achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes.

**Prosperity and equity**—foster efficient and effective settlement patterns to promote prosperity, equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

**Amenity and security**—promote attractiveness, convenience, utility, physical safety and a sense of security in built form and urban design.

**Avoidance, amelioration and sustainability**—predict, avoid and ameliorate the adverse economic, social and environmental consequences of human activities (e.g. climate change, degradation of natural environments), promote intergenerational equity, prudent use of non-renewable resources, the sustainable use of renewable resources, and the precautionary principle.

**Community and knowledge**—reflect our distinctive national character and nurture vibrant communities and contribute to our knowledge of ourselves and our built and natural environments.

## How we plan

## System principles

**Integration and coordination**—combining and rationalising structures, functions, policies and processes under a clear set of rules to produce a coherent, integrated outcome. Integration can be *vertical* (combining and rationalising higher order and subsidiary systems, e.g. a hierarchy of plans), or *horizontal* (integrating different aspects of a single system, e.g. a state government).

**Certainty**—consistency regarding the conditions under which development will proceed, the rate and scale at which it will take place, and the way planning principles and mechanisms will be applied.

**Responsiveness**—the flexibility needed to respond to changing or unforeseen circumstances.

**Equity**—fairness, such as protection of personal rights, equitable access to appeal mechanisms, and procedures that do not discriminate against individuals or groups.

**Efficiency, effectiveness and economy**—no unnecessary processes and governance arrangements, the integration of appropriate performance measures into evaluation mechanisms, and outputs that promote the economical use of resources (without compromising equity and accountability).

**Transparency, accessibility and accountability**—clear and appropriate accountability for decisions, as described in legislative provisions, organisational structures and planning instruments, for example; open and legible planning systems that users can access and interact with.

**Community engagement**—promotion of community engagement, including consultation, participation and increased community understanding and support for planning processes.

## What issues should be addressed through planning

## Issues principles

**Urban form**—the design of urban structures, from the macro or regional scale, to the relationship between individual built forms and the public realm; community diversity and vitality in urban environments.

**Infrastructure coordination**—integrating infrastructure provision with land use and development; linking coordinated infrastructure provision to funding arrangements such as government investments or developer contributions.

**Social equity**—determining the national distribution of social opportunity and disadvantage and ameliorating social inequity.

**Environmental protection and restoration**—protection or restoration of environmental values—usually part of a ‘triple bottom line’ commitment of environmental, social and economic outcomes.

**Resource management and security**—integrating resource management and security with land use and development planning.

**Housing choice and affordability**—dealing with housing choice and affordability in an integrated way through the planning system.

**Sustainable transport**—coordination of transport planning and investment; improved mobility and accessibility; reduced environmental impacts.

# Background

## Issues and challenges

Significant population growth pressures during the 1990s and early 2000s have created a legacy of stress in the planning of new communities and the provision of infrastructure and social services to existing and planned communities at national, regional and local levels.

At the same time, emerging or evolving issues, including climate change, energy security, traffic congestion and housing affordability, have presented challenges to Australia's planning systems. Many issues that were previously entirely local in character have assumed regional or even national dimensions, for example security of water supply and waste management. Existing planning policy frameworks are struggling to respond.

Structural and micro-economic reform of the Australian economy has led to greater integration of the national economy (e.g. nationally consistent approaches to business regulation) and increased the mobility of industry, including the development industry. As the national economy becomes more fluid and seamless, greater harmonisation of planning and development assessment systems will be required.

More recently, the global financial crisis prompted national, state, territory and local governments to support their respective communities through economic stimulus spending, for example new and accelerated infrastructure spending, including cross-jurisdictional 'nation building' projects.

## Planning reform

Australian states and territories either have undertaken or propose to undertake major reform of their planning systems in response to the abovementioned issues and challenges, which are also key drivers for the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) national micro-economic reforms.

In November 2008 COAG agreed to a National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy (NP Agreement) to progress regulatory reform in 27 priority areas, two of which are environmental and development assessment reform.

The focus of COAG activity in this area to date has been largely on development assessment. In support of COAG's reform agenda, the Local Government and Planning Ministers Council (LGPMC) is overseeing five projects.

Four of the projects are specific to development assessment. The fifth project—National Planning Systems Principles—recognises that development assessment reform will be most effective if carried out in the context of effective and responsive land use planning systems.

COAG is one of several national bodies considering reforms to state and territory planning systems (*see Appendix for more details*).

## Bigger picture

Although it is in need of reform, development assessment is only one element of a large and complex planning framework—its reform should not be progressed in the absence of, or to the detriment of, broader strategic reform.

It is understood that it isn't until a person wants to undertake some form of development, or their neighbour does, that the community really takes an interest in planning. However, by concentrating on development assessment we direct attention and resources to a part of the planning system that offers the least opportunity to influence outcomes, is resource-intensive and often adversarial.

State and territory planning frameworks influence, and are influenced by, policy across all other portfolios. For example, if immigration policy is changed it could significantly increase (or decrease) the migrant population, with ramifications for measures to manage projected population growth in Australia's cities.

Similarly, growth management strategies inform infrastructure provision (type, and how and when it is delivered) and therefore the timing and extent of infrastructure investment by governments and the private sector. In other words, infrastructure is a fundamental element of urban planning.

The current economic crisis is forcing a rethink on how planning and infrastructure provision are managed. Historically, infrastructure provision was considered after land use planning decisions had been made. Now, as scarce public resources become scarcer, there is a critical need to undertake land use planning and infrastructure planning simultaneously, and in an integrated manner.

In summary, new thinking and agreement on a broad set of national planning systems principles is needed to help state and territory governments improve their planning performance, better enabling them to achieve desired social, economic and environmental outcomes through planning.

## Planning system weaknesses

The shortcomings of Australian planning systems generally fall into one of three categories:

- Structure and governance
- Planning processes
- Scope and content.

Following is a summary of the main deficiencies relating to each.

### Structure and governance

- Limited understanding and acceptance of the role and potential of integrated land use and infrastructure planning within governance structures generally.
- Poor connections to broader areas of policy and delivery, including infrastructure coordination, budgetary policy and service/infrastructure delivery systems. This can manifest itself in both poor input to planning processes, and inadequate implementation.
- Mismatches between the scale of planning issues and the scale of governance structures which seek to address them. This can include centralising decision making on the one hand, and leaving broader issues to be addressed through subsidiary governance structures on the other. As the scope of issues changes (from local to regional and from regional to national) governance structures are not flexible enough to manage the scale and complexity of the issues.
- Lack of harmonisation of planning systems limits the capacity for cooperatively addressing common issues, and leads to inefficiency through waste and rework in the development and implementation of planning policy.
- Lack of capacity in planning systems, including skills shortages in key areas, mismatches between planning education and the needs of the workplace, and cultural attitudes to development within planning and allied professions.

### Planning processes

- Continuing emphasis on community consultation rather than participation and engagement.
- Belated community involvement in the planning and development assessment process, when the policies governing the outcomes are already set. The community's lack of understanding of planning systems can lead to it having unrealistic expectations about

its capacity to influence outcomes. If its expectations are not met, it is less likely to agree with the planning outcomes.

- Inappropriate ways of involving the community in planning and development assessment decisions. An emphasis on community involvement in development assessment leads to over-reliance on costly and time-consuming adversarial processes.
- Imbalance between certainty, innovation and flexibility. Issues demanding a responsive and innovative approach can be hamstrung by rigid and sluggish planning processes, while communities can feel disenfranchised by the inappropriate use of mechanisms such as call-ins and special legislation to facilitate outcomes under evolving or unforeseen circumstances.

### Scope and content

- Lack of consensus and loss of focus on the rationale for planning and its appropriate scope limits the acceptance and effectiveness of planning. The role and scope of planning sometimes becomes blurred, with people raising false expectations that planning can deal directly with many social issues (such as homelessness or disability), or getting confused over infrastructure charging, betterment, cost-impact mitigation and broader taxation arrangements. While there are many areas of social, economic and environmental policy to which sound planning systems can contribute indirectly, it is important these be distinguished from the primary areas of focus of land use planning systems.
- Proliferation of policy instruments affecting land use, development and infrastructure at different levels, many of which are conflicting or inconsistent.
- Lack of a strategic focus and a preoccupation with regulatory outcomes in planning instruments—indicating confusion between the role of development assessment and the broader role of planning systems in delivering effective, efficient and liveable communities.
- Lack of consensus on appropriate planning horizons to deal with key planning issues, leading to either a short-term focus aligned with political cycles, or a lack of clarity and focus due to unrealistically long planning horizons and commitments to outcomes far in advance of need.
- Poorly developed or outdated policy content, including population projections, relationships between growth and employment, linkages between home, work and recreational opportunities, sustainability outcomes, and the impact of planning policy on the economic viability of industry.

- Lack of technical capacity or willingness to develop clear and succinct statements of planning policy, leading to broad and unmeasurable aspirational statements.

## National Planning Systems Principles project

The National Planning Systems Principles project aims to identify a comprehensive and consistent set of principles that the Australian, state, territory and local governments collectively and collaboratively agree to follow.

The principles offer a framework to:

- enable the strategic role of planning to be better recognised and promoted at national, state, regional and local levels
- progress strategic planning system reform
- underpin strategic infrastructure investment—aligning budgetary, investment and planning decisions
- inform the development of appropriate governance structures.

The principles will:

- inform the broader national micro-economic reforms
- harmonise Australian planning and infrastructure coordination systems across states and territories to make the systems more responsive, efficient and sustainable and maximise social, economic and environmental outcomes
- create or improve linkages between land use and infrastructure planning, and broader financial and physical resource management and allocation systems, to enhance national productivity and economic efficiency
- provide a consistent point of reference for planning system reform, ensuring reforms are evidence-based and reflect established best practice
- establish a balanced and responsive policy environment that can address a range of new and emerging public policy and urban management challenges, such as climate change, energy security and the global economy
- enable efficient and effective Australian, state/territory and local government investment in infrastructure and community services

- promote strategic planning and greater understanding and acceptance of the role of planning generally in other, non-urban-planning areas of government and within the community.

The principles and best practices in this document have been informed by national and international research and analyses, including historical and contemporary planning legislation and metropolitan policies and strategies, and a think tank of leading planning experts and commentators.

The principles fall into one of three categories:

**Purpose principles**—*why* we plan

**Systems principles**—*how* we should plan

**Issues principles**—*what* issues should be addressed through planning.

The *system principles* are the focus of this document as— together with accompanying examples of best practice— they describe the ‘look and feel’ of planning systems best equipped to deliver desired outcomes.

# Purpose principles

The following principles describe the purpose of planning, the overriding goal of which is to:

**Facilitate and manage change in land use and the built environment in a way that contributes positively to the wellbeing of individuals and communities, and the natural and built environments on which they rely.**

Purpose principles	<i>Why we plan</i>
<b>Form, patterns and legibility</b>	Improve urban form, legibility and coherence to balance and achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes, for example through separation of incompatible land uses, identifying and promoting hierarchies in mobility systems, and identifying relationships between compatible elements of urban form.
<b>Community</b>	Reflect our distinctive National character and nurture vibrant communities by making and offering spaces for the expression of a diverse range of individual and cultural identities and values, and to foster social inclusion whereby all Australians have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society.
<b>Prosperity</b>	Foster efficient and effective settlement patterns to promote prosperity.
<b>Equity</b>	Promote the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, for example by promoting equitable access to public transport, or contributing to housing affordability.
<b>Amenity</b>	Promote attractiveness, convenience and utility in urban design and built form.
<b>Security</b>	Promote physical safety (e.g. by segregating dangerous or noxious land uses) and personal security derived from familiar surroundings and a sense of community.
<b>Amelioration</b>	Ameliorate the adverse consequences of human activity (e.g. climate change, degradation of natural environments) and other external costs.
<b>Avoidance</b>	Predict and avoid the adverse economic, social and environmental consequences of human activity, to avert the need for amelioration.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Promote intergenerational equity, prudent use of non-renewable resources, the sustainable use of renewable resources, and the precautionary principle.
<b>Knowledge</b>	Contribute to our knowledge of ourselves and our built and natural environments.

# System principles—best practice

The following system principles—and accompanying examples of best practice—identify *how* planning should be undertaken in order to support the purpose (*why*) principles. They cover:

- the **structures** of planning systems, in particular the systems of governance and legislative frameworks within which planning systems work
- planning **processes**, including the way planning instruments are prepared, consulted on and administered

- the **scope and content** of planning, and its relationships with other allied activities.

The *system principles* are the focus of this document as— together with the accompanying examples of best practice— they describe the ‘look and feel’ of planning systems best equipped to deliver desired outcomes.

## Principle 1—Integration

Integration involves not merely combining structures, policies or processes, but also rationalising them to produce *coherent*, integrated outcomes.

Integration may be vertical, involving rationalising structures, content or processes between higher-order and lower-order systems, or horizontal involving integrating like aspects of a single system (*see Figure 1*).

Integration is an effective way to make sense of complex systems. It also imposes a discipline on policymakers to ensure policy outcomes are consistent, and the community is not left to navigate inconsistent and conflicting policy frameworks. Applied to delivery systems such as development assessment, it promotes efficiency and effectiveness by providing a single, consistent response.

Integration is difficult. It requires policymakers to dispense with common notions of hierarchical and compartmentalised policy and governance systems, and focus on planning systems and outputs.

### Best practice:

- Legislation and governance structures facilitate integration of national, state, regional and local policies in a clear *hierarchy* of strategic planning instruments, which must include spatial plans at both regional and local scale.
- Regional spatial plans are based on biophysical regions and regional communities of interest.
- Local spatial plans are based on local communities of interest.
- A consistent hierarchy of future oriented and publicly available plans, including:
  - long term integrated strategic plans (15–30 years)
  - medium term coordinated infrastructure and land use plans (5–15 years)
  - near term prioritised infrastructure plans supported by detailed projects plans (2–5 years).
- Regional and local spatial plans facilitate identification and protection of critical national and state infrastructure, such as national transport corridors, international gateways, major national communications facilities, and facilities essential to the defence and security of the nation.
- Legislative processes for making planning instruments facilitate vertical integration by requiring referral to higher-order authorities at appropriate stages of their development.
- Legislative and governance arrangements facilitate horizontal integration by rationalising or resolving conflicting land uses and infrastructure and resource allocation at each level of authority.
- Integration of policies for land use, development, infrastructure coordination and environmental assessment at national, state, regional and local scales.
- Subsidiarity—vertically integrated policy is expressed in instruments with a scope that reflects the scale of the affected community. These instruments are the sole or key benchmarks for measuring achievement of planning outcomes.
- Integrated governance structures for delivering planned outcomes (e.g. multi-disciplinary development assessment teams and integrated transport delivery).

## Principle 2—Coordination

Unlike integration—which involves combining like aspects of systems—coordination involves relationships between structures, policies and processes that are different, yet interdependent.

For example, planning systems establish desired future states as benchmarks for measuring the output or performance of processes designed to achieve those states (such as development assessment and infrastructure investment). On the other hand, a resource allocation system (such as a budgetary or natural resource allocation system) may seek to achieve the ‘highest and best’ use of a resource, or alternatively a redistribution of the resource in the community’s interest. Planning and financial and physical resource allocation systems are different in character, but will influence, and be influenced by, each other.

As with integration, coordination may be either vertical or horizontal.

### Best practice:

- Clear structural and procedural linkages between planning systems and related systems for infrastructure funding and delivery, and allocation of physical and financial resources.
- Governance structures adopt a corporate, or ‘whole of government’, approach to both planning and delivering outcomes, for example by coordinating development assessment systems with infrastructure delivery systems.
- Infrastructure and service delivery agencies participate in planning processes, and commit to aligning investment strategies and works programs with the resulting plans.
- Key planning instruments facilitate coordination between land use and development outcomes and infrastructure and service delivery systems.
- Key planning instruments actively identify opportunities for private and public sector investment and innovation and linkages with other government service delivery programs.
- At the local government level, planning outcomes are clearly linked with local government corporate plans.

## Principle 3—Certainty

Participants in planning processes seek certainty and consistency regarding the conditions under which development will proceed, the rate and scale at which it will take place, and the way in which planning principles and mechanisms will be applied.

Certainty is essential to manage the risk inherent in investing financial and other resources to achieve planned outcomes. It is also required to maintain community confidence in the planning system.

### Best practice:

- Key planning instruments are clearly authorised under legislation and have the force of law.
- Procedures for making key planning instruments are established under authorising legislation with clear timeframes and milestones for each participant.
- Legislative systems clearly support performance-based planning outcomes by requiring decisions to be made in accordance with established performance measures, and permitting departure from those measures only under exceptional and clearly articulated circumstances.
- Key planning instruments are performance based, clearly articulated (in plain English), and commit to planned outcomes.
- Outcomes expressed in planning instruments are accompanied with examples of these outcomes.

#### Principle 4—Responsiveness

A responsive planning system responds effectively to changing or unforeseen circumstances. Responsiveness (or flexibility) can be at odds with certainty, as a responsive planning system may, in some cases, mean forgoing established orthodoxy or processes designed to provide certainty.

Consequently, leading practice models require clear and consistent principles and practice regarding the balance between these two principles.

Lack of responsiveness in a planning system can affect its integrity, as other means of facilitating urgent outcomes are found.

##### **Best practice:**

- Strategic policy is expressed through flexible and responsive planning instruments rather than in authorising legislation.
- Authorising legislation is sufficiently flexible to accommodate accelerated planning processes for critical infrastructure, major projects and significant unforeseen circumstances—subject to clear public interest criteria for triggering such processes.
- Planning instruments incorporate clear, consistent and measurable performance indicators, circumstances triggering reassessment of policy, and timeframes for review.
- Planning instruments do not ‘over plan’, and maximise opportunities for responding to future unforeseen circumstances while ensuring sufficiently certain outcomes.

#### Principle 5—Equity

Equity refers to fairness in planning systems, including the protection of personal rights, equitable access to review and appeal mechanisms, and procedures that do not discriminate against individuals or groups.

##### **Best practice:**

- The scope of legislation and governance structures reflects the scale of the affected community.
- Equitable access to information for all individuals and stakeholder groups.
- Planning instruments establish clear qualitative and quantitative strategic outcomes.
- Planning instruments constrain rights and liberties only to the extent necessary to achieve strategic outcomes in the community’s interest.
- To the extent each applies, planning instruments clearly distinguish between infrastructure charging, cost-impact mitigation, betterment and injurious affection.
- Planning instruments clearly explain instances where economic, social and environmental costs are imposed disproportionately.

## Principle 6—Efficiency and economy

Efficiency and economy refers to systems that are not beset by unnecessary processes, and have governance structures that promote the free flow of resources and information, and outputs that foster the economical use of resources.

### Best practice:

- Legislation and governance arrangements facilitate efficient and economical planning processes and minimise delay.
- All steps in planning processes are subject to time limits, with sanctions for non-performance where practicable.
- Amendment processes are proportionate to the complexity and impacts of the amendments.
- Planning outcomes expressed in key planning instruments encourage the economical and sustainable use of resources.

## Principle 7—Transparency and accessibility

Transparency is a measure of how open and legible planning systems are to stakeholders. Accessibility describes how easily a user of the system can access and interact with the system.

### Best practice:

- Clear legislative distinction between planning, approval, administrative and appeal/review authorities.
- All planning instruments are accessible and searchable electronically.
- Supporting documentation is available electronically.
- All instruments with like effect are made under the same processes and are similarly structured.
- Processes for making key planning instruments conform with accepted contemporary planning methodologies.
- Analytical processes by which particular policy outcomes are arrived at are explained in planning instruments or supporting documents.
- Key planning instruments at regional level and below are spatially based.
- Key planning instruments contain concise statements of strategic intent.
- Key planning instruments are structured to clearly distinguish statements of strategic intent, implementation measures, and benchmarks for measuring outcomes.
- Statements of strategic intent are expressed in clear, concise and measurable terms.
- Key planning instruments are written in plain English and avoid using jargon.
- Infrastructure planning and funding frameworks are transparent and based on the equitable distribution of the costs of development.

## Principle 8 – Accountability

Planning systems can significantly impact on the rights, expectations and wellbeing of individuals and communities. There needs to be clear and appropriate lines of accountability for key planning decisions, including clear legislative provisions, organisational structures with clear chains of accountability, and planning instruments that allow individuals and the community to clearly ascertain who is responsible for decisions about their content and implementation.

### Best practice:

- The making and administering of all planning instruments are the responsibility of an elected and accountable body politic.
- Delegation is minimised and subject to clear oversight and guidance.
- Governance structures are invested with the appropriate authority to administer their own planning instruments.
- Statutory rights of review (not appeal) are available for communities adversely affected by planning instruments, based on non-adversarial processes designed to optimise outcomes for the community.
- Reserve powers for higher levels of governance are exercised only if the interests of those levels, or if the integrity of processes or decisions at the lower level, are compromised.
- Legislation requires decision makers to take account of the results of community engagement.
- Independent advisory mechanisms are established to provide governments with advice on priorities and implementation of planning frameworks.
- Review bodies follow inclusive and non-adversarial procedures.
- Any decisions to accelerate planning processes for key infrastructure or major projects are made by an accountable elected official and are subject to clear criteria established in legislation.
- All strategic outcomes in planning instruments are the responsibility of a clearly identified accountable entity.
- Where implementation involves the exercise of discretion, the limits of the discretion are clearly established.
- Strategic outcomes are linked clearly to implementation measures through clearly articulated hierarchies of actions or standards.
- The scope and content of planning instruments affecting the rights of individuals are justified as necessary in the community's interests.
- Interference with individuals' rights is limited to what is essential for the achievement of outcomes in the community's interest.

### Principle 9—Effectiveness and authority

Effectiveness is a measure of the impact of planning instruments. Devoting substantial time and resources to developing and implementing plans is ineffective if their impacts are not discernable from those of other activities. Legislative and organisational constraints may limit the effectiveness of planning, as may poorly conceived or expressed content, or processes that confuse or disenfranchise stakeholders.

#### Best practice:

- Governance structures for developing and administering planning instruments reflect the scale of the instruments.
- All key planning instruments used to determine outcomes are specifically authorised under legislation.
- There are clear statutory timeframes for review and reporting, including sunseting of regulatory instruments consistent with legislative standards in the relevant state or territory.

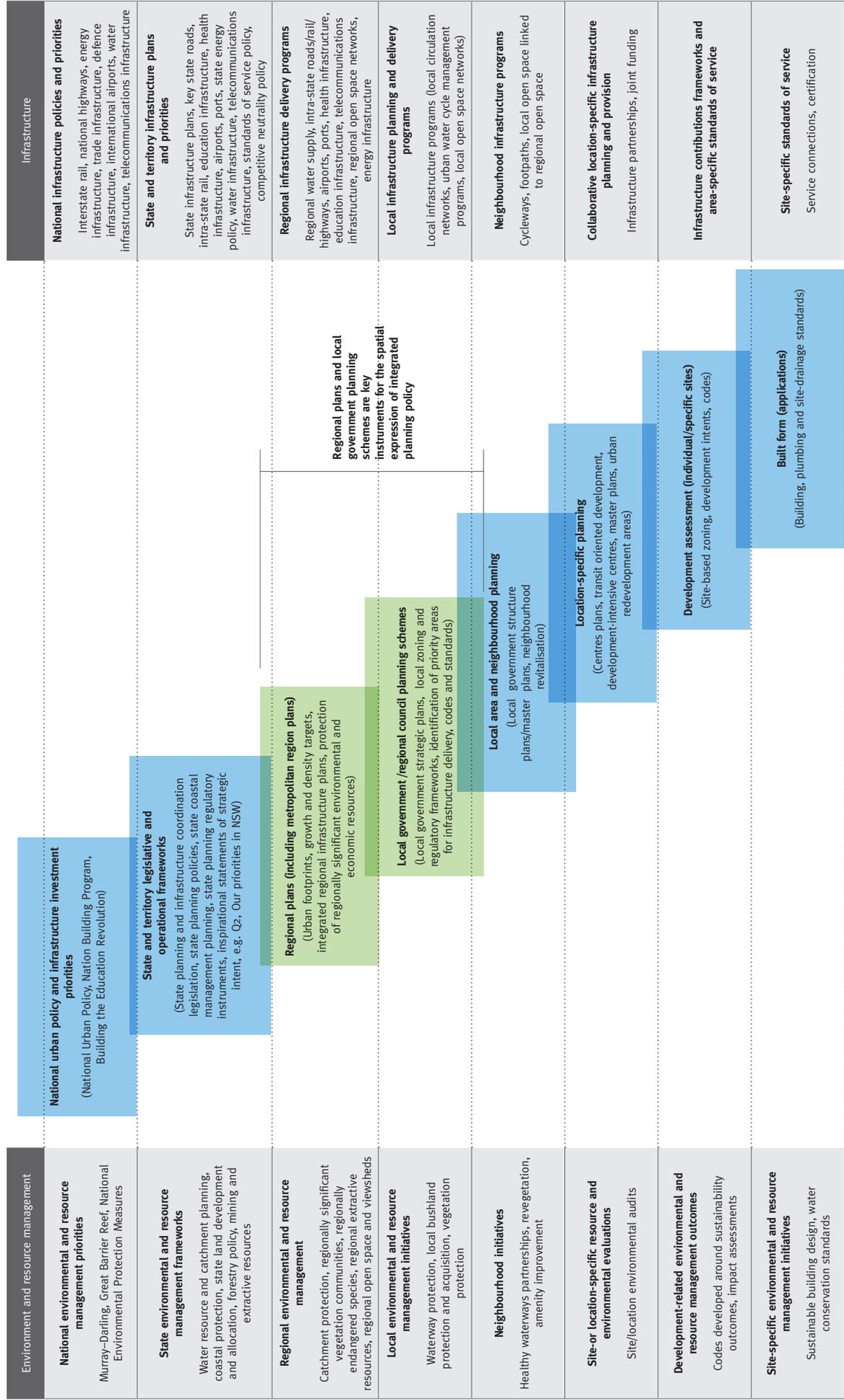
### Principle 10— Engagement

Most planning systems provide for consultation, however *consultation* suggests a passive or reactive role for the community. *Participation* suggests active community involvement but does not necessarily imply acceptance or support for the process or its outcomes. Planning systems should seek to promote community *engagement*, a more meaningful process that involves not only participation, but also an understanding of, and support for, planning processes (notwithstanding that widespread community agreement on all outcomes is unlikely).

#### Best practice:

- Legislative and governance arrangements facilitate community engagement—not merely consultation or participation.
- There are legislative guarantees of community engagement in planning processes.
- Community engagement commences as early as practicable in the relevant planning process.
- Strategic outcomes in planning instruments are expressed in positive and aspirational terms designed to engage stakeholders in achieving them.

**Figure 1. Integration (vertical and horizontal)**



# Issues principles

Planning systems identify a range of problem- or topic-based principles that are applied in the management and regulation of land use and development. There is consistency nationally in the general content of state planning outcomes and regional/metropolitan policies and strategies—but the way these objectives, policies and strategies are expressed varies greatly.

Planning systems address the following outcomes to varying degrees. For example, planning is a key determinant of urban form and infrastructure coordination, but is more of a facilitator of social equity and civic vitality, which are also influenced by many other factors and policies.

Issues principles	<i>What issues should be addressed through planning</i>
<b>Urban form</b>	Urban form covers the design of urban structures—from the macro or regional scale, to the relationship between individual built forms and public spaces, and the relationship between economic planning and employment centres and transport linkages servicing residential areas.
<b>Social equity</b>	Australia's major cities and regions are critical in determining social opportunity and disadvantage. Consequently, planning systems can help ameliorate social inequity.
<b>Environmental protection and restoration</b>	Most planning legislation and statutory instruments include provisions to protect or restore environmental values, usually as part of a commitment to a 'triple bottom line' of environmental, social and economic outcomes.
<b>Infrastructure coordination</b>	Most planning systems seek to integrate infrastructure provision with the management of land use and development, however the methods for achieving this vary widely. Many planning frameworks also link coordinated infrastructure provision to funding arrangements such as development contributions.
<b>Civic vitality</b>	Civic vitality encompasses issues such as community diversity and liveliness in urban environments, and social and cultural interaction. It may entail multiple uses of open space, and improving the amenity and safety of public spaces, for example.
<b>Resource management and security</b>	<p>Resource management is inextricably linked with land use and development and should be addressed in an integrated way in planning instruments. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State land allocation policies have a strong influence on the availability of land in some peri-urban and regional localities, and consequently influence planning outcomes aimed at allocating sufficient land for anticipated growth.</li> <li>• State water allocation policies and water buybacks may substantially affect the capacity of local and regional economies to meet increased demand for water, and may significantly influence the allocation of land for industrial and agricultural development.</li> <li>• Protection of vegetation can substantially reduce the availability of land to accommodate future growth and development.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing choice and affordability</b>	Declining housing affordability requires housing supply and affordability to be dealt with in an integrated way through the planning system.
<b>Sustainable transport</b>	Transport systems are likely to become increasingly important in achieving urban objectives relating to mobility and accessibility and reduced environmental impacts.

# Appendix—National bodies considering planning reform

Several national bodies are considering the reform of state and territory planning frameworks, and the benefits of improved systems.

## COAG Cities Infrastructure and Planning Taskforce

On 30 April 2009 COAG agreed to establish a Cities Infrastructure and Planning Taskforce (CIAPT) to examine national, state and local government strategic planning frameworks to ensure they support the ongoing integration of land use planning and state and national infrastructure in Australia's major cities.

In a communiqué, COAG said this work would recognise that:

**...the states have clear responsibility for land use planning within their jurisdictions; that the Commonwealth has an interest in the efficient operation of national infrastructure; and that efficient infrastructure and improving our cities requires the better integration in jurisdictions of major city land use planning with state and national transport, energy, water and social infrastructure investment plans.**

## COAG working groups (primarily the Business Regulation and Competition Working Group (BRCWG) and the Infrastructure Working Group)

COAG agreed on 29 November 2008 to a National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy (NP Agreement) to progress national regulatory reform in 27 priority areas.

The NP Agreement is part of COAG's broader reform of Commonwealth–State financial relations, and includes a commitment by the Commonwealth to funding through National Partnership payments to facilitate and reward delivery of regulatory reform, provided the states and territories meet the key timeframes and milestones set out in the NP Agreement's Implementation Plan.

Environmental and development assessment reform are two of the 27 priority areas under the NP Agreement.

The Infrastructure Working Group established a Major Infrastructure Approvals Process sub-group (MIAP) to review current planning and development approvals

processes in all Australian states and territories and make recommendations for achieving greater uniformity and efficiency in planning, environmental and other approval processes for major national infrastructure.

MIAP's report was considered and endorsed by COAG at its 2 July 2009 meeting, and the report's recommendations are currently being implemented.

## Local Government and Planning Ministers Council

The Local Government and Planning Ministers Council's (LGPMC) charter is to undertake the functions required of it by COAG. Its objective is to enhance the effectiveness of local government and planning in Australia and New Zealand. Its terms of reference include:

- to agree on policy and strategic approaches for local government and planning issues where a national approach is necessary to deliver effective outcomes to local communities
- to promote cooperation between all levels of government and to encourage harmonisation across state and territory boundaries in the development and implementation of public policy, strategies and programs affecting local government and planning
- to provide leadership to all areas of government, industry and the community in working collaboratively to advance local government and planning issues.

In August 2008, the LGPMC agreed to proposals to expedite development assessment reform in support of COAG's reform agenda and undertook to report the results to COAG by the end of 2009.

To facilitate work required by COAG, the LGPMC formed a Development Assessment sub-group. In September 2008 the sub-group agreed to establish the National Development Assessment Reform (NDAR) Program, which consists of five projects:

- Electronic Development Assessment Implementation
- National Performance Monitoring
- Low Risk Development Code Template
- Measurement of Benefits of Development Assessment Reform
- National Planning Systems Principles.

The projects have each been progressed by different states and territories under a memorandum of understanding, using a funding pool provided by the Commonwealth and states and territories and administered by the Queensland Government.

While four of the five NDAR projects focus specifically on development assessment, the National Planning Systems Principles project recognises that development assessment reform will be most effective if carried out in the context of effective and responsive land use planning systems. This project will potentially be critical to the CIAPT's deliberations.

The LGPMC is supported by the Local Government and Planning Joint Committee (heads of planning and local government departments and the Planning Officials Group (senior planning officers within departments). The Development Assessment Forum (DAF) provides independent advice and recommendations to the LGPMC on how to streamline the processes used for development assessment and cut red tape without sacrificing the quality of the decision making. Where appropriate, the LGPMC provides direction to DAF.

## Development Assessment Forum

The DAF, comprising state and territory government representatives, industry and professional associations, and the Australian Local Government Association, released its A Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia in March 2005. It describes the leading practices for the national harmonisation of development assessment systems across Australia. In August 2005, the LGPMC endorsed the leading practice model as 'an important reference for individual jurisdictions in advancing reform of development assessment'.

Leading practice number one states:

**An effective policy framework is an essential precondition for assessment.**

The leading practice model expands on this, declaring:

**Clear, specific, and (where possible) measurable policy is the backbone of an effective model for development assessment....**

**There are certain general principles which apply to the formulation of planning policy. Essentially, policies must be for a valid planning purpose and be based on sound planning principles. Policy objectives should be clearly stated and be capable of being implemented effectively.**

**To meet the expectations of developers and the community, policy needs to be developed through the use of best-practice community consultation and engagement.**

In short, the leading practice model recognises the importance of robust and responsive planning frameworks to development assessment reform, and the need to underpin these frameworks with sound principles and leading practice.

## Infrastructure Australia and the Major Cities Unit

The Commonwealth Government has established Infrastructure Australia to:

- develop a strategic blueprint for national infrastructure needs and—in partnership with the states, territories, local government and the private sector—facilitate its implementation
- provide advice to Australian governments about infrastructure gaps and bottlenecks that hinder economic growth and prosperity
- identify investment priorities and policy and regulatory reforms necessary to enable timely and coordinated delivery of national infrastructure investment
- advise on and guide allocations from the Building Australia Fund in accordance with its national audit and infrastructure priority list.

In addition, the Major Cities Unit of Infrastructure Australia has been charged by the Commonwealth Government with identifying opportunities for a systems approach to thinking, policy decisions and allocation of resources in Australia's major cities and, based on its findings, developing a national urban policy. The unit's overriding goal is to facilitate more sustainable, productive and liveable cities across the nation.

## Other Commonwealth Government initiatives

Other Commonwealth Government initiatives, such as the Housing Affordability Fund and the review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, will also potentially impact on Australian planning systems.

## Connections between bodies and projects

The work of the abovementioned groups has a clear scope, but there is significant overlap. There are opportunities for synergies and alignment, which will be critical to the effectiveness of the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) planning reforms.

The CIAPT is looking broadly at metropolitan management but with a focus on urban policy and infrastructure investment. The 'principles' it has identified to date are largely desired outcomes of metropolitan complexes, rather than planning systems principles.

The LGPMC's work has the broadest policy scope: Looking at an overarching set of principles and benchmarks that encompass all key aspects of the planning framework. The National planning systems principles in particular provide a planning framework that would foster more rigour and integration, and address shortcomings in governance and plan implementation. The framework is not intended to result in homogenous planning approaches and outcomes. It provides states and territories with enough flexibility to work within and build upon their existing frameworks.

The BRCWG is focussed on development assessment as part of a micro-economic and regulatory reform agenda. All five LGPMC sponsored projects are of direct interest to the BRCWG.

The interests of the LGPMC, the CIAPT and BRCWG are represented below:

### National planning systems principles

Overarching best-practice principles encompassing the whole planning framework

#### CIAPT

Urban policy, focussing on major economic investment in infrastructure and integration with land use planning

Detailed governance and decision making frameworks aligned particularly with government investment decisions

#### BRCWG

Procedural reform of development assessment

Micro-economic and regulatory reform



**Secretariat**

Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council  
GPO Box 594  
Canberra ACT 2601

tel +61 2 6274 7010

fax +61 2 6274 8040

[LGPMC@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:LGPMC@infrastructure.gov.au)