

WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2020

Message from the Minister

Rob Stokes - NSW Planning and Public Spaces Minister



It's come to my attention that Ku-ring-gai Council has raised issues about how housing targets should be implemented through new strategic plans, which is generating some confusion about our strategic planning system.

Let me be very clear - we are entirely committed to strategic planning, and its positive outcomes, such as jobs, housing and public spaces, while ensuring strong collaboration across the board. Over the past five years, we have been focussed on reforming the planning system to be more strategic and one based on principles rather than prescription; one that encourages a far more collaborative approach with all layers of government contributing to more positive outcomes for the community.

In my view, this has worked well, with NSW Government, councils and industry developing strategic plans and implementing them through the Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS) that were finalised earlier this year.

In addition to these efforts, the Greater Sydney Commission has also undertaken commendable work with councils to develop long-term housing targets that this city needs to effectively manage our growing population. These are now translating into Local Housing Strategies prepared by councils to plan for new homes that meet local needs and reflect local context and character. Local government has, for a long time, demanded the freedom to set their own strategic planning direction and our modern planning system has given councils the autonomy to determine how they will address common challenges.

But it is not just about independence, it's about responsibility too.

This system is based on both state and local government taking responsibility to plan for and manage growth across Greater Sydney. Through the LSPS assurance process, councils have signed up to indicative 6-10 year housing targets that they would implement through local housing strategies and changes to their local environmental plans. Councils within Greater Sydney, including Ku-ring-gai, have set local housing targets which that have been assured by the Greater Sydney Commission. In fact, Ku-ring-gai Council's 6-10 year housing target of 3,000-3,600 dwellings was settled in consultation with council and is reflected in the Local Housing Strategy it has exhibited for community consultation. Working together to meet the needs of a growing Sydney is at the heart of our planning system.

Certainly, planning should account for the constraints and opportunities that will factor into how we manage and distribute growth, but we shouldn't shy away from the need for communities to plan better for how new housing and jobs are delivered.

However, if councils don't want to lead planning for growth at a local level, it will simply mean the Government will need to take more direct action. If Ku-ring-gai Council doesn't want to take on that responsibility, they are welcome to ask the Government to do the work for them. So let's continue the good work on new strategic plans for councils across Greater Sydney and NSW.