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Planning review asked to preserve city's fringes

Sydneysiders would support urban renewal in and around suburban centres if it meant less intrusion in other residential areas and more land preserved on the city's fringes, the Department of Planning said today.

A preliminary summary of submissions for Sydney's Metropolitan Strategy review also found strong support for agricultural land preservation on Sydney's edges, Director-General of Planning Sam Haddad said.

The preliminary outcomes were discussed this morning at the Sydney Leaders' Forum, organised by the Department. The forum was held in Sydney's CBD and examined long-term planning for the metropolitan area.

More than 400 submissions and over 1000 online comments were received when public consultation on both the Metropolitan Strategy discussion paper and Metropolitan Transport Plan ended on May 28.

"There was almost universal support for the 'City of Cities' approach in the current Metropolitan Strategy, which includes strengthening the regional cities of Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith," Mr Haddad said.

"We also saw strong support in public comments and planning sector submissions for multi-unit housing near established centres, especially those well served by public transport.

"Some have said that attractive, well-designed apartment buildings and townhouses would gain acceptance if the community understood they would only be allowed near centres, reducing development pressure in other residential areas.

"Many recognise that new residents would revitalise suburban centres by increasing the local spend, leading to new, more varied and more viable leisure and business opportunities locally."

Mr Haddad said Sydney's forecast population growth - from 4.3 million in 2006 to 6 million by 2036 - focussed attention on where to build the 770,000 new homes that will be required.

"Many suggested that infill development had the advantage of accessing existing infrastructure and slowing the rate at which land on the city's fringes is used up," he said.

Mr Haddad also released some preliminary information out of a report commissioned by the Department from the Centre for International Economics.

The report shows that if Sydney only used greenfield sites for new housing, compared to the current setting to place 30 per cent of new housing in these areas, overall infrastructure, social and environmental costs would increase.

“This indicates that infill development in existing areas – in addition to its many other benefits – also helps keep down overall housing costs,” Mr Haddad said.

Both an independent submissions report, and findings from the Centre for Internal Economics report, will be released shortly.

Mr Haddad said all submissions and comments on the Metropolitan Strategy and the Metropolitan Transport Plan were being reviewed and integrated to produce a Metropolitan Plan for Sydney later this year.

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