Department of Planning,
Housing and Infrastructure

Discussion Paper: A New Approach to Strategic Planning

What we heard and how we responded

August 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Discussion Paper: A New Approach to Strategic Planning

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Consultation

The Discussion Paper: A New Approach to Strategic Planning (Discussion Paper) sought feedback on proposed reforms to the NSW strategic land use planning framework. The proposed reforms aim to create a clearer, simpler and more effective planning system that better aligns land use planning with infrastructure delivery, housing needs and environmental outcomes and community priorities.

The Discussion Paper outlined a new three-tiered land use planning framework comprising State, Regional and Local plans. It also proposed seven statewide planning priorities to guide future land use planning decisions across NSW.

The Discussion Paper was publicly exhibited alongside the Draft Sydney Plan and Draft Statewide Industrial Lands Policy between 10 December 2025 and 27 February 2026. Feedback was sought on the proposed planning framework, statewide planning priorities and governance arrangements.

The Department undertook a comprehensive engagement program including webinars, stakeholder meetings and discussions with councils across metropolitan and regional NSW. Feedback was received from community members, councils, industry representatives, planning professionals, peak bodies, community organisations and government agencies.

A total of 190 formal submissions and 70 survey responses were received.

The feedback has informed the final State Land Use Plan and the refinement of the strategic planning framework.

The Framework

Summary of key themes

This section provides a high-level summary of the feedback on the exhibited new approach to strategic planning framework, and the changes that have been made to address comments.

Table 1: Draft Sydney Plan summary of content changes

What we heard	How we responded
Framework design Stakeholders generally supported the proposed strategic land use planning framework and its alignment with other plans. Feedback highlighted the importance of maintaining a framework that is clear, flexible and capable of responding to local circumstances. Many submissions emphasised the value of local knowledge and the need for planning decisions to reflect local priorities and community needs. There was support for strengthening the role of Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) as a means to respond to local matters and improving alignment between local, regional and state planning processes. Several stakeholders, including the NSW Aboriginal Land Council highlighted the importance of embedding Aboriginal governance and decision making throughout the planning framework to support self-determination and meaningful participation in planning.	The Department has considered this feedback and will retain the framework as outlined in the Discussion Paper. Regular reviews and modular updates will enable the framework to adapt over time while maintaining a clear strategic direction. Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS) will continue to play an important role in addressing local matters and the LSPSs guidelines will be reviewed to strengthen their role within the planning system. Further information will be released in coming months about how the LSPS framework will be adapted in the new three-tiered strategic planning system. This will help councils to start planning their reviews and updates to their LSPS as regional plans for their areas are finalised.
Capacity and resourcing Many councils and other stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential resource implications of the proposed reforms. Many submissions highlighted the need for technical guidance and appropriate resourcing to support implementation.	The Department acknowledges these concerns. A key objective of the reforms is to simplify the strategic planning system and improve clarity across all levels of planning. Updated guidance for Local Strategic Planning Statements will provide clarity for councils, and the Department may explore further opportunities for additional guidelines, data sharing and templates.

Regional areas and plans Stakeholders broadly supported the continued role of regional planning but raised concerns regarding the scale of the Regional NSW planning area and the proposed Central Coast - Lower Hunter boundary. Some submissions noted that large planning regions may not adequately reflect local identity and the diverse regional environments and characteristics. Others highlighted the importance of recognising connections between regions and addressing cross-border issues.	The Regional NSW Plan will consider planning issues that are common to different parts of our regions - for instance those issues that might affect local communities in a subregion will be drawn out and strengthened, recognising shared opportunities and challenges across different parts of this area. Local Strategic Planning Statements will continue to provide a mechanism for local issues to be considered. Local identity and shared opportunities and issues across neighbouring local government areas will still be an important part of the Regional NSW plan. The Central Coast–Lower Hunter Plan boundary will support planning across a growing corridor extending from north of Sydney to Newcastle. Lower Lake Macquarie and the upper suburbs of Central Coast are some of the highest growth areas for both homes and jobs in the region. We must carefully plan for these places together to ensure that no matter what LGA this growth is in, that the right infrastructure and planning opportunities are being enabled in this part of the region. Regional plans will also consider connections between regions and relevant cross-border matters.
Roles and governance, Implementation & accountability Many stakeholders sought a clearer delineation of responsibilities between State, regional and local levels of government. Feedback highlighted the importance of accountability, coordination and effective implementation of planning outcomes. Some stakeholders expressed concern that decision-making could become increasingly centralised, while responsibility for implementation rests with local government, with some submissions also raising resourcing issues.	The Department recognises the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Regular reviews of the strategic planning framework will help to assess how the system is operating and identify opportunities for improvement. The State Land Use Plan also identifies areas for future reform to strengthen implementation and accountability.
Monitoring, updates, engagement and evidence-based planning Stakeholders strongly supported the use of monitoring and regular reviews to ensure the planning framework remains effective and responsive to changing circumstances. Feedback also supported the use of data sharing, monitoring and reporting infrastructure. Feedback highlighted the importance of clear performance indicators, robust data collection and transparency in reporting, including how data will be used. Submissions supported the modular approach to plan updates, and emphasised the need for meaningful engagement, and improved coordination between consultation and update processes. There were also calls for stronger alignment between planning review cycles and existing reporting processes.	The Department supports a monitoring and review framework that enables continuous improvement. Indicators will be developed following the publication of the State Land Use Plan and regional plans. Monitoring outcomes will be reported periodically and used to inform updates to the framework and State and regional land use plans.

Statewide land use priorities

Stakeholders generally supported the introduction of statewide planning priorities and recognised the importance of aligning land use planning with the delivery of housing and infrastructure, economic growth and environmental outcomes.

Feedback highlighted the need for flexibility in implementation to reflect local and regional contexts. Stakeholders also called for stronger links between priorities, delivery mechanisms and infrastructure commitments.

The following section summarises key feedback received on each priority and outlines how that feedback has informed the State Land Use Plan.

Aboriginal Outcomes

Embedding co-design to recognise Country in planning outcomes. Success means that land use plans recognise Country and custodianship to support use and benefit opportunities for Aboriginal landowners to achieve social, cultural, environmental and economic self-determination

Table 2: Aboriginal Outcomes – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders generally supported the inclusion of Aboriginal Outcomes as a statewide planning priority. Feedback called for stronger recognition of Aboriginal people as custodians, landowners and partners in planning. Feedback also highlighted the importance of co-design, clearer implementation guidance, and greater emphasis on cultural landscapes, self-determination and measurable outcomes.	In response, the State Land Use Plan strengthens the role of co-design throughout the planning process and provides stronger alignment with the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and the Aboriginal Land Planning Framework. The State Land Use Plan introduces a comprehensive framework that recognises Aboriginal people as Traditional Custodians, landowners and delivery partners, and explicitly links land use planning outcomes to social, cultural, environmental and economic self-determination. Additional guidance will also be included on integrating Aboriginal knowledge through the Connecting with Country Framework. The State Land Use Plan also strengthens the role of Region and Local Plans, which will allow councils to tailor approaches to the community context.

Housed

Delivering affordable, diverse housing in accessible locations. Success means more homes are built faster, close to jobs and transport.

Table 3: Housed – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders strongly supported increasing housing supply, with an emphasis on affordability, housing diversity, and access to jobs, services and public transport. Many submissions called for clearer housing targets, stronger links between housing growth and infrastructure delivery, and greater transparency regarding how housing outcomes will be monitored and delivered.	The State Land Use Plan introduces a stronger, evidence-based approach to housing delivery including a focus on maintaining a pipeline of feasible housing capacity. The Plan also strengthens direction on housing diversity, including expectations to align housing types with changing demographics and to monitor diversity alongside total supply. The link between housing and infrastructure is also strengthened by requiring growth to be sequenced and aligned with services and transport, supported by tools such as the Urban Development Program.

Prosperous

Growing resilient, innovative economies. Success means land use decisions help create jobs, supports emerging and diverse industries, and strengthens supply chains

Table 4: Prosperous – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders supported the objective of building resilient and innovative economies and integrating economic planning with land use. Submissions also highlighted the need to protect industrial land and strengthen recognition of agriculture and primary industries within the planning framework.	The Statewide Industrial Lands Policy will be included in the State Land Use Plan Technical Appendices to guide planning for industrial land supply. The State Land Use Plan has also been strengthened through the inclusion of a dedicated section on agriculture.

Connected

Linking communities with efficient transport systems. Success means homes, jobs, and services are easier to reach and more accessible.

Table 5: Connected – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders broadly supported stronger integration between transport and land use planning. Feedback emphasised the importance of connecting housing, freight, transport and infrastructure planning to support sustainable growth. Submissions also highlighted the need to recognise regional transport corridors, subregional connections and cross-border linkages.	The State Land Use Plan reinforces the relationship between land use planning and key transport strategies. The Plan also recognises other government agency plans including the *Connecting NSW Strategy*, , which is focused on transport and making moving around NSW safe and accessible. Regional plans will consider the interconnection between different subregions within NSW and areas within other states and territories in relation to transport, to support integrated transport outcomes.

Resilient

Supporting a sustainable environment and biodiversity to help achieve net zero and build climate resilience. Success means communities can better withstand hazards and environmental pressures

Table 6: Resilient – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders generally supported the Resilient Priority and its focus on environmental sustainability, climate adaptation and natural hazard management. Many submissions sought greater emphasis on biodiversity and its integration in the framework, while others suggested separating environmental outcomes from natural hazard matters. There were requests for clearer definitions and metrics in relation to the implementation of Resilient priority actions.	The Department has considered these issues to be interlinked, and will retain them within a single Priority. The State Land Use Plan links to endorsed NSW government documents including the *NSW Plan for Nature* and the *NSW Water Strategy*. The State Land Use Plan is strengthened by Priority Statements relating to biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge, climate change scenarios and natural hazards data, and the early consideration of water use. A glossary has been included in the State Land Use Plan to improve clarity and consistency.

Liveable

Building vibrant, inclusive communities with well-designed, activated spaces that integrate heritage, culture, and natural features. Success means more public spaces, better urban design, and stronger social cohesion.

Table 7: Liveable – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders emphasised the importance of creating communities that support wellbeing, accessibility, inclusion and quality of life. Feedback highlighted the value of social infrastructure and heritage. Many stakeholders sought a broadened definition of liveability including stronger links to services and local character.	The State Land Use Plan includes priorities that focus on social infrastructure, cultural identity, accessibility and inclusive design. The plan provides clear direction on walkable neighborhoods, access to open space, community facilities and cultural infrastructure, and recognises changing community needs such as ageing populations.

Coordinated

Aligning land use with infrastructure delivery. Success means major infrastructure investments directly support planned growth areas

Table 8: Coordinated – key themes and responses

What we heard	How we responded
Stakeholders strongly supported close integration between infrastructure delivery and land use planning. Many submissions highlighted concerns regarding infrastructure funding, sequencing and governance arrangements. There was broad recognition that housing and employment growth must be supported by timely infrastructure investment and improved coordination between agencies. Submissions also raised the limitations of development contributions, the constraints on councils' ability to fund infrastructure required to service growing populations and the need for government commitment to infrastructure development.	The State Land Use Plan strengthens the relationship between infrastructure planning and land use planning. One of the primary aims of the land use planning framework is to have a coordinated and clear approach to infrastructure and land use planning. The State Land Use Plan illustrates the connection between the State Land Use Plan and the *State Infrastructure Strategy,* which is a 20-year infrastructure roadmap. Ongoing monitoring and review will support the delivery of coordinated planning outcomes over time.

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