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15 November 2019

Dr Rosemary Dillon
Chief Executive Officer
Blue Mountains City Council
2-6 Civic Place
KATOOMBA NSW 2780

Email – council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Dr Dillon,

Blue Mountains 2040 Living Sustainably – Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement

The Property Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on Council's draft local strategic planning statement (LSPS).

As Australia's peak representative of the property and construction industry, the Property Council's members include investors, owners, managers and developers of property across all asset classes. We are pleased to provide the following comments for your consideration.

The Property Council supports the position taken by the NSW Government to use the LSPS as a mechanism for the translation and to give effect to the land-use based strategies identified in Council's *Community Strategic Plan 2035*. An LSPS should identify a range of steps Council must take in planning for the city's future and respond to the Greater Sydney Commission's *Greater Sydney Regional Plan* and *Western City District Plan*.

Our members look forward to the finalisation of Council's LSPS by 30 March 2020 and the subsequent process that will involve Council making updates to *Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015* to give effect to the relevant provisions of the regional and district plans.

Comments in specific parts of the draft LSPS and are provided in the following submission.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Troy Loveday, Senior Policy Advisor on (02) 9033-1907 or tloveday@propertycouncil.com.au

Yours sincerely



Jane Fitzgerald
NSW Executive Director
Property Council of Australia

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Local Strategic Planning Statement

Theme 1 – Sustainability

Local Planning Priority 1: *Living sustainably in the City within a World Heritage National Park*

The draft LSPS identifies 21 actions (1.1 to 1.21) aligned to Planning Priority 1.

Key actions for Council include:

- Seeking an exemption from the *Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code* to ensure appropriate local stormwater management controls are maintained (action 1.3);
- Reviewing and implementing targeting ground-truthing of significant vegetation communities listed in BMLEP 2015 (action 1.10);
- Updating BMLEP 2015 and DCP 2015 to ensure protection of native vegetation and enhancement of water sensitive urban design controls (action 1.11);
- Council will continue to pursue a whole of government response to the protection of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (BMWHA) in the context of increased tourism and the opening of the Western Sydney Airport (action 1.20); and
- Council will advocate for the World Heritage Listing of our towns and villages as a culturally significant place (action 1.21).

Response:

The Property Council supports the application of the Medium Density Housing Code in the Blue Mountains in the absence of any strategy from Council to address the identified shortage of affordable and seniors housing.

The Property Council looks forward to further industry engagement around amendments to the Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan and Development Control plan with respect to the protection of significant vegetation communities, and delivery of water and heat sensitive urban design principles. Council should look toward the common standards developed by the Planning Partnership as the basis for developing local controls.

With respect to major Sydney infrastructure projects, the framework for delivery of a Local Strategic Planning Statement requires the draft statement align with the wider context of the Greater Sydney Commission's Greater Sydney Regional Plan and Western City District Plan.

The Property Council understands the Blue Mountains is home to unique natural and built heritage assets, however the draft LSPS fails to identify how the existing instruments are insufficient. Council should demonstrate where the existing listings and controls are deficient prior to seeking additional protections.

Local Planning Priority 2: *Managing bushfire risk and responding to climate change in our unique environment.*

The draft LSPS identifies 18 actions (2.1 to 2.18) aligned to Planning Priority 2.

Key actions for Council include:

- Reviewing policy options for waste collection for denser types of residential development (action 2.4);
- Report on feasibility and options for achieving a low carbon City (action 2.6);
- Developing planning controls to strengthen sustainability requirements for new housing and development in the Blue Mountains (action 2.9);
- Continue to advocate for reduction in freight movements on the Great Western Highway

- through the Blue Mountains; (action 2.13 and
- Working with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on a reconsideration of the 1 in 100 year flood level and risk profiles for new development in flood mapped areas (action 2.18).

Response:

The Property Council is supportive in-principle of measures to manage bushfire risk and improve environmental sustainability within the Blue Mountains.

Recently, the Property Council in partnership with the Green Building Council of Australia launched *Every Building Counts: A practical plan for emissions reduction*. This initiative provides recommendations to policymakers at a local, state and federal level. We encourage Council to explore the document when implementing Actions 2.6 and 2.14.

Where planning controls require amendment (such as flood controls), the Property Council looks forward to further industry engagement.

With respect to advocacy for reduced freight movements on the Great Western Highway, Council is reminded of the need for the LSPS to align with other Greater Sydney Commission documents, and is encouraged to spell out the level of support it has for a potential Bells Line of Road upgrade as a potential option to service the future demand for freight movements between Sydney and Western NSW.

Local Planning Priority 3: *Planning for the increased well-being of our community.*

The draft LSPS identifies 14 actions (3.1 to 3.14) aligned to Planning Priority 3.

Key actions for Council include:

- Implementing the identified Green Grid projects including the Scenic Southern Escarpment, Eastern Escarpment and the Blue Mountains Bike Trail along the Great Western Highway (action 3.8);
- Deliver bushland restoration work and recreation area at the former Lawson Golf Course as part of the Western Parkland City Liveability Program under the Western Sydney City Deal (action 3.9); and
- Council will advocate for improved transport links to medical facilities, including services from the Blue Mountains to Westmead Hospital (action 3.14).

Response:

The Property Council is supportive in-principle of measures to provide for increased community wellbeing.

Council is encouraged to integrate its aspiration for shared/joint use of school facilities (Action 3.3) into its Community Facilities Strategic Plan (Action 3.1).

Theme 2 – Liveability

Local Planning Priority 4: *Strengthening creativity, culture and the Blue Mountains as a City of the arts.*

The draft LSPS identifies 12 actions (4.1 to 4.12) aligned to Planning Priority 4.

Key actions for Council include:

- Work with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to amend the Standard Instrument LEP to provide greater flexibility for events and temporary uses, and opportunities for certain events to be considered as complying development (action 4.5);
- Work with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to investigate options for amending the Standard Instrument LEP to provide opportunities for studios or makers spaces within town centre areas (action 4.6);
- Complete and begin to implement the Blue Mountains Economic Strategic Plan (Action 4.7); and
- Seek to elevate the importance of culture and creativity through an update to the objectives of the BMLEP 2015, to recognise cultural events.

Response:

The Property Council is broadly supportive of efforts to provide greater planning flexibility to attract events to the Blue Mountains and investment in the arts and culture, and we look forward to participating in industry engagement and consultation when more details become available.

Noting the lack of emphasis on addressing unemployment, particularly youth unemployment in the Blue Mountains, Council is encouraged to review its LSPS following completion of its Economic Development Strategy.

Local Planning Priority 5: Preserving and enhancing heritage, character and liveability.

The draft LSPS has identified 16 actions (5.1 to 5.16) aligned to Planning Priority 5.

Key actions for Council include:

- Pursuing a Residential Character zone or an alternate planning solution within the Local Environmental Plan, to retain and enhance the residential character of the Blue Mountains (action 5.1);
- Commence implementation of the recommendations of the Blue Mountains Local Character Study 2019 (action 5.2);
- Updating and begin implementation of the Blue Mountains Heritage Study (action 5.4);
- Seek exemption from the Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code to ensure local design and character controls are maintained (action 5.7);
- Develop design controls and guidelines for medium density housing, appropriate to the Blue Mountains context (action 5.8);
- Review local planning controls to ensure dual occupancy and secondary dwelling development continues to achieve the character and liveability outcomes expected in the Blue Mountains context (action 5.9); and
- Commence a heritage review of local heritage listings within the Blue Mountains local government area, for updating the LEP (action 5.16).

Response:

The Property Council understands the Blue Mountains is home to unique natural and built heritage assets, however the draft LSPS fails to identify how the existing instruments do not provide sufficient protection.

The Property Council supports the application of the Medium Density Housing Code in the Blue Mountains in the absence of any strategy from council to address the identified shortage of affordable and seniors housing.

With respect to updating the Blue Mountains Heritage Study and reviewing heritage listing and planning controls, the Property Council is supportive-in-principle of these steps and looks forward to further engagement and consultation as these actions are initiated.

Local Planning Priority 6: *Meeting the diverse housing needs of our community.*

The draft LSPS has identified 11 actions (6.1 to 6.11) aligned to Planning Priority 6.

Key actions for Council include:

- Implement the recommendations of the Blue Mountains Local Housing Strategy 2019 (action 6.1);
- Proceed with place- based Master Planning of key town centres, including a robust community engagement plan, to investigate diverse housing opportunities close to services and transport (action 6.2);
- Pursue opportunities for hidden density and infill, such as additional locations for secondary dwellings with appropriate planning controls to maintain character and landscape (action 6.3);
- Work with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on additional opportunities under the State planning policy for the location of seniors housing (action 6.4);
- Consider opportunities to rezone industrial zoned land, with historical residential use and close to town centres, to allow seniors housing (action 6.5);
- Investigate incremental rezoning opportunities for multi-dwelling housing in appropriate locations, to contribute to the 6-10 year housing target and housing diversity in the City (action 6.7);
- Develop design controls and guidelines for medium density housing and seniors housing, appropriate to the Blue Mountains context (action 6.8); and
- Complete a Local Housing Affordability Review, to further investigate housing stress in the local community and opportunities for an increase in affordable housing, including potential partnerships with affordable and social housing providers (action 6.10).

Response:

The Property Council is supportive of these steps in-principle and looks forward to further engagement as these steps commence. Noting the shortage of employment land supply across Sydney, caution is encouraged when considering a reduction in industrial land.

Until Council develops a viable plan to address the shortage of diverse housing options, the Medium Density Housing Code should remain in place.

Theme 3 – Productivity

Local Planning Priority 7: *Sustaining a healthy local economy, including a focus on Katoomba as our strategic centre.*

The draft LSPS identifies 15 actions (7.1 to 7.15) aligned to Planning Priority 7.

Key actions for Council include:

- Commence preparation of the Katoomba Masterplan (action 7.4);
- Review and update the Planning Study for Employment Lands in the Blue Mountains (2012), investigate opportunities to potentially rationalise and review future uses for industrial zoned land (action 7.7); and
- Work with the State government and other agencies to manage visitation to ensure the visitor experience is preserved and tourist volumes contribute to the local economy, whilst also preserving the amenity of local residents (action 7.15)

Response:

The Property Council has concerns regarding the capacity of the steps identified in the draft LSPS to accommodate the employment targets for Katoomba as set in the Western District Plan. As a general principle, Council should exercise a degree of caution when rezoning its existing supply of industrial land, noting the proximity to the Great Western Highway, and the importance of last-mile logistics in serving the existing population in an evolving retail environment.

When seeking to attract employment to Katoomba, council should give consideration to its property portfolio and how it can be utilised to maximise opportunities for investment in employment generating activity.

Local Planning Priority 8: Managed increased tourist visitation.

The draft LSPS identifies 13 actions (8.1 to 8.13) aligned to Planning Priority 8.

Key actions for Council include:

- Develop a camping strategic plan, including leveraging funding opportunities for paid camping within the City (action 8.1);
- Continue to review and implement the high priority actions as defined in the Visitor Infrastructure Investment Strategic Plan (action 8.7); and
- Investigate alternative funding sources for management of areas affected by increased tourism including funding for visitor infrastructure, natural area management and risk management impacts flowing from increases in visitor numbers (action 8.11).

Response:

The Property Council supports steps to provided for an expanded tourist and visitor economy. We have concerns regarding the positioning of tourism as a source of congestion and a cost imposition on ratepayers. Tourism should be positioned as a source of employment and drawcard for investment from allied and supporting industries. Council should take a proactive position seeking to increase the amount of tourist accommodation provided throughout the LGA.

Local Planning Priority 9: Improving local transport connections and accessibility, including walking and cycling.

The draft LSPS identifies 13 actions (9.1 to 9.13) aligned to Planning Priority 9.

A key action for Council involves:

- Updating Blue Mountains DCP 2015 to consider the requirement for Green Travel Plans (such as links with public transport) for significant traffic generating developments (action 9.12);

Response:

The Property Council is broadly supportive of the actions targeted at improving transport connectivity across the Blue Mountains. We also encourage Council to consider incorporating improved connectivity to Western Sydney and the aerotropolis in its forward advocacy agenda.

The Property Council looks forward to early engagement and consultation around the delivery of green travel plans.