Media Release

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Urban policy lays foundation
DIY kit still requires step-by-step instructions and someone to build it

The Residential Development Council (RDC) welcomes the Federal Government’s release today of Our Cities, Our Future - A National Urban Policy as being a positive foundation to build on for much-needed change in the way cities and regional areas are planned and serviced.

This policy is a good start and makes some encouraging moves toward addressing the housing needs of all Australians, said Caryn Kakas, Executive Director, Residential Development Council.

“We welcome the Government’s broad principles, goals and objectives with many of the industry’s most pressing concerns being recognised such as improving planning processes, strategic land use planning and linking up infrastructure to communities. However, it falls short of providing specific direction as to how these objectives will be implemented with no clear ownership of who will deliver on these worthy goals.”

“This policy outlines several key principles in delivery including the recognition of the essential links between housing, employment opportunities and infrastructure. The Government has also made a fundamental shift in their understanding of housing policy by acknowledging that housing affordability can only be delivered through ‘a suitable balance between infill and greenfield development’,” she said.

“What is still missing are the instructions. We have the box with all the numbered pieces and a picture on the outside to guide us, but we still need those directions. With all these separate pieces to assemble, we need someone in charge to ensure that the bookcase doesn’t turn into a coffee table,” said Ms Kakas.

“The bold objectives outlined set the stage for a quantum shift in the way we build cities and other urban areas, but this must be done through action and must be driven by all levels of government.”

Ms Kakas also praised the focus paid to the provision of affordable housing.

“The National Urban Policy refers to the ‘provision of affordable housing and the need for diverse dwelling forms and sufficient affordable housing options across all tenures’.”

“Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many Australian workers, both to buy or rent, and this is being driven in no small part by a lack of supply. Now is the time for a genuine housing policy with clear outcomes and strong targets to improve affordability. This housing policy should expand upon the positive first steps made in this new National Urban Policy and provide the industry and communities with a clearer picture as to how it will address these dual concerns.”

“This National Urban Policy outlines several positive initiatives and is a good first step in envisioning a clearer, more prosperous future for all Australians that will be much more than a picture on the outside of the box. Action and implementation are now the key deliverable needed for the residential sector to secure the future of housing.”

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