

*NSW Minister for Planning and
Infrastructure*
Brad Hazzard

*Australian Government Minister
for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and
Communities*
Tony Burke

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GROWTH PLAN GETS THE GO-AHEAD FOR SUSTAINABLE SYDNEY

The Australian and NSW governments have signed off on a program which paves the way for 30 years of sustainable growth in western Sydney.

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke and NSW Planning and Infrastructure Minister Brad Hazzard today announced the *Sydney Growth Centres Strategic Assessment Program* which will streamline delivery of new homes to meet growth, cut red tape for developers and provide certainty for communities.

A strategic assessment provides a big-picture study under national environmental law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, of an area to assess how environmental values can be best protected while allowing sustainable development.

Mr Burke said the *Sydney Growth Centres Strategic Assessment Program* would free up at least 2500 hectares of land for employment, facilitate delivery of more than 180,000 homes and drive more than \$7.5 billion in infrastructure investment.

“This plan for Sydney cuts red tape which makes housing more affordable without wrecking our local environment,” Mr Burke said.

“Sydney now has a framework for urban growth for the next 30 years that cuts red tape and provides planners, developers and the community with long-term certainty.

“We are making sure that we’re developing sustainable communities that accommodate Sydney’s growing population over the next 30 years, while providing certainty around how development can progress and ensure protection of our critically endangered environment like the Cumberland Plain Woodland.

“This program is about taking a big-picture approach to development and environmental protection, and looking at cumulative environmental impacts over Sydney’s growth centres rather than a piecemeal development approach – it’s equivalent to about 500 individual project submissions and means they don’t have to be done on a project by project basis.

“This is a great example of proactive and collaborative decision-making by the Australian and New South Wales governments. It also means the NSW Government will have to return the conservation benefits to western Sydney communities by setting aside open spaces in this region.”

A strategic assessment reduces red tape by considering federal and state environmental planning issues in a single assessment process and give greater upfront clarity to developers, landholders, planners, industry, government and the community.

It means that once a program has been endorsed under the EPBC Act and the types of development or activities allowed to take place have been approved, individual projects do not need any further approval under national environmental law if done in accordance with the approved program.

The Sydney Growth Centres Strategic Assessment incorporates a \$530 million commitment by the NSW Government for the Growth Centres Conservation fund to be invested on the Cumberland Plain in western Sydney.

Mr Hazzard said, "This is a great leap forward for a common sense approach to ensuring NSW gets the development it needs in western Sydney and we get a collaborative effort by Federal and State Governments to protect conservation areas in western Sydney.

"The endorsement of the *Sydney Growth Centres Strategic Assessment Program* will reduce the time and cost of the approval process, while increasing certainty for the delivery of housing and infrastructure.

"That's because environmental impacts are assessed - and offsets are identified and secured - only once, rather than twice under separate NSW and Commonwealth environment legislation for the same impact," Mr Hazzard said.

"This will help streamline delivery of the homes we need to accommodate Sydney's anticipated population growth of 1.7 million by 2036.

"A substantial part of Sydney's greenfield housing will be built in the North West and South West Growth Centres, where more than 180,000 new homes are planned for 500,000 people in liveable communities over the next 25 to 30 years.

"The Commonwealth's lawful entitlement to have an input to conservation issues in development sites had frustrated developers because of what they perceived as the doubling-up on environmental accountabilities ie: to the State and the Commonwealth.

"I want to thank Minister Burke for his prompt and constructive bridging of what had been a Federal-State divide for many years – it shows clearly Federal and State Governments can work well together for the best interests of residents."

Now that the program is endorsed, the Federal Government will consider approval for the types of activities permitted to take place under it. Such activities will need no further federal assessment, provided they accord with the program.

Under its Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities strategy, the Australian Government has committed \$29.2 million to support strategic assessments in up to seven regional growth areas to establish sustainable communities in an environmentally sensitive way.

For more information go to: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/assessments/strategic.html>

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