

SPUN

SYDNEY
PERI-URBAN
NETWORK
OF COUNCILS

ACTION PLAN 2020



INTRODUCTION

Sydney's peri-urban areas are currently undergoing dramatic change, bringing significant growth and opportunities. However these opportunities are not without their challenges. Without sound strategic approaches to the management of peri-urban areas we are likely to see the disappearance of Sydney's rural and environmental landscapes and perpetuation of the key issues faced in these areas.

Key strategic documents, including Regional and District plans, highlight the importance of our rural areas and contain objectives and goals related to protecting and enhancing the environmental, social and economic values of such areas. Design-led place-based planning is identified in these strategies as a way to achieve targeted outcomes and respond to the distinctive character of rural landscapes, towns and villages. To deliver on the goals outlined in this strategic framework, further investigation into the values of peri-urban land to be protected and enhanced and ongoing discussion on the unique issues facing peri-urban areas are required. This will ensure Sydney's peri-urban areas are managed and adequately protected so that future generations of Sydney and surrounds continue to have an urban fringe that supports resilience and prosperity.



SYDNEY PERI-URBAN NETWORK SPUN

The Sydney Peri-Urban Network of Councils comprising of 12 Councils on the Sydney surrounds, was formed in 2013 to stimulate discussion and action by all levels of Government. SPUN aims to be a leader in advocating for solutions to peri-urban issues, by:

- Working together to promote better recognition of the unique values of peri-urban lands and the challenges affecting those areas.
- Acting as a forum for peri-urban Councils to share knowledge and best practice.
- Building opportunities for partnerships, collaborative approaches and resource sharing in relation to solutions and responses to peri-urban issues.
- Continuing to provide a source of primary food production and raw materials.

SPUN Member Councils

SPUN consists of the following Councils*:

- Blue Mountains
- Camden
- Central Coast
- Hawkesbury
- Hornsby
- Kiama
- Penrith
- Shellharbour
- Shoalhaven
- The Hills
- Wingecarribee
- Wollondilly

**Note that SPUN comprises professional representation (officers) from each Council. The views of SPUN are therefore the collective views of the professional representatives.*

What is “Peri-urban”?

Peri-urban means the interface between urban and rural areas. Peri-urban lands therefore typically comprise a mix of urban and rural-residential areas, scattered settlements, productive agricultural lands, natural biodiversity areas and diverse topographies.

Why are peri-urban areas so valuable?

Sydney's peri-urban lands are critical to the future resilience of the city as a whole. They are valuable because:

- They play a vital role in ensuring Sydney's food security and reducing food miles.
- They make an important and significant economic contribution, particularly through agricultural production and tourism.
- They provide multiple environmental values:
 - o as a carbon sink,
 - o as a biodiversity resource,
 - o as 'green lungs' replenishing Sydney's air quality and helping to reduce 'urban heat island' effects, and
 - o by supporting healthy waterways.
- They provide Sydney's drinking water.
- They are a recreation and tourism resource for both residents and visitors.
- They are rich in cultural heritage, containing a range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage landscapes and sites.
- They provide highly valued scenic landscapes and vistas including the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the Illawarra escarpment.
- They provide homes in peri-urban settings.
- They provide a source of important raw materials for extractive industries.

The values of Sydney's peri-urban lands contribute to the health and wellbeing of all residents. Importantly, the peri-urban lands contribute to Sydney's identity and sense of place.

What are the challenges and opportunities for peri-urban areas?

Sydney's peri-urban lands are facing significant challenges:

- Urban growth pressures – Significant urban growth is occurring in the peri-urban areas, with Sydney's urban footprint being 'played out' on the fringe. As the city's population increases, this growth will continue with further peri-urban areas identified for housing, employment and infrastructure.
- Loss of agricultural lands – Productive agricultural lands, both existing and potential, are being lost to urban development and further subdivision.
- Land use conflict – Further development, coupled with community expectations, bring increasing conflicts between rural and urban land uses.
- Impacts on environmental values – Existing and new land uses in the peri-urban areas have the potential to significantly affect the environment including bushland and biodiversity, air quality, water quality and flows, cultural heritage, scenic landscapes and The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
- Climate change and severe weather events – With an increasing population, the peri-urban areas are where the risks of climate change and severe weather events like drought, heatwaves, flooding and bushfires are heightened.
- Inadequate transport and other infrastructure – Infrastructure on Sydney's peri-urban fringe is stretched. There is limited capacity, for example, of communications, transport and sewerage infrastructure. Providing new infrastructure to support communities is also challenging in terms of affordability and efficiency.
- Inadequate social infrastructure and affordable housing – The peri-urban areas have limited social infrastructure, such as health, education and social services, as well as limited affordable housing opportunities.
- Insufficient employment opportunities – People living in peri-urban areas often need to travel considerable distances for work due to limited local employment opportunities.
- Funding and policy 'limbo' – There is a lack of policy settings and funding programs which acknowledge the peri-urban areas as unique and complex (not entirely metro, not entirely rural).
- Community expectations - Increasing community expectations do not always align with the reality of peri-urban living.

As Sydney continues to grow and change, there will be opportunities for the peri-urban areas. Some examples are:

- Expanding the role they play in providing fresh agricultural produce to Sydney and the Sydney surrounds (those regions surrounding the greater Sydney Metropolitan region) and to national and international markets with the establishment of the Western Sydney Airport and agribusiness precinct.
- Providing areas to develop innovative and sustainable agriculture supported by institutional research and development.
- Supporting further recreation and tourism opportunities.
- Recognising and promoting the cultural heritage and landscape values of the peri-urban areas.
- Continuing to promote and strengthening their role in providing important environmental values including air quality, healthy waterways and biodiversity, including opportunities for providing biodiversity offset sites for new urban development, and minimising impact on The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area; and
- Continuing to protect Sydney's drinking water.

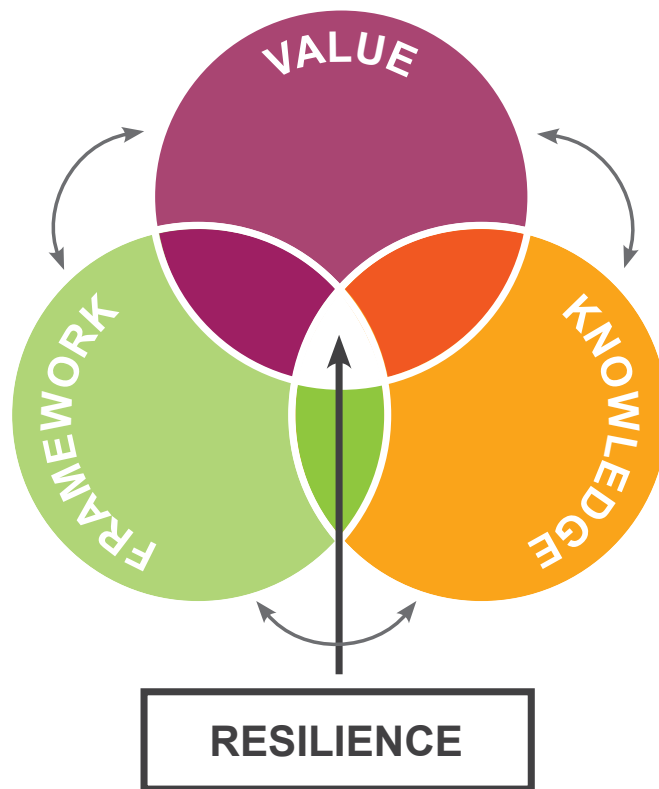


PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The Sydney Peri-Urban Network of Councils has identified three interrelated priority themes for action:

1. **Value** the peri-urban – better recognition and understanding of value and significance
2. **Framework** for Protection – legislation, policy settings and other innovative mechanisms
3. **Knowledge** – evidenced based decisions and approaches

The diagram below illustrates the interconnectedness of these three themes. A new **framework** for protection and management can only be achieved if the **value** of these lands is understood and widely recognised, and both of these themes are in turn dependent on sound **knowledge**.





ACTION PLAN

The actions in this plan will be considered and where appropriate implemented by the SPUN members and/or associated working groups of SPUN and we encourage all sections of our community and all relevant agencies to pursue these actions in their own strategic planning processes.

VALUE

All about identity; leadership; advocacy; education; awareness; community engagement.

ACTION	HOW
1. Lobbying for policy at the Local, State and Federal Levels	1.1 Establish an agreed definition and terminology for peri-urban land categories. 1.2 Acknowledge peri-urban areas as unique and complex; different to metro, rural and regional areas in policy considerations. 1.3 Identify a peri-urban funding category and seek adoption of that by NSW Government. 1.4 Continue to have a seat on the Greater Sydney Commission. 1.5 Advocate for an advisory committee to examine how the planning system can better support agriculture and growth in the PeriUrban areas.
2. Peak bodies awareness of peri-urban issues	2.1 Seek resolutions that value peri-urban issues.
3. Proactive involvement in major strategic planning initiatives	3.1 Participate proactively in the following initiatives: 3.1.1 100 Resilient Cities Project. 3.1.2 Regional and District Planning. 3.1.3 Regional Growth & Infrastructure Plans. 3.2 Promote inclusion in Integrated Planning and Reporting. 3.3 Promote inclusion in Local Strategic Planning Statements.
4. Increase awareness of peri-urban issues	4.1 Develop a strategy to educate and create awareness to address expectations of new residents
5. Increase awareness of value of peri-urban areas	5.1 Develop an Awareness Campaign 5.2 Provide a presence at significant events.

FRAMEWORK

All about subregional and Metro-planning; Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR); infrastructure coordination; local planning strategies; legislative change; new governance models; issues management; policy and regulation; market based mechanisms and incentives; innovative approaches, regional growth, Local Council, Community Strategic Plans and Local Strategic Planning Statements

ACTION	HOW
6. Sustainable balanced growth and protection of agriculture and rural character	6.1 Develop a policy framework regarding agriculture in the Sydney Region. e.g. establish a “fence line in the paddock” 6.2 Advocate for and provide more certainty regarding the protection and enhancement of the metropolitan rural area and other surrounding rural areas. 6.3 Implement policy approaches that encourage development of the infill areas within Sydney’s existing “footprint”.
7. Appropriate infrastructure	7.1 Advocate for and contribute to coordinated planning to address infrastructure shortfalls and deliver appropriate infrastructure outcomes in peri-urban areas.
8. Specific legislation (and governance)	8.1 Develop appropriate new legislation e.g. a “Greater Sydney Agriculture Lands Protection Act” or an equivalent State Environmental Planning Policy. 8.2 Review existing legislation. 8.3 Establish an agency with peri-urban responsibilities and focus – “Greater Sydney Peri Urban Authority”.
9. Other mechanisms and approaches	9.1 Implement other mechanisms and approaches based on findings of research (e.g. rating incentives, transferrable development right schemes). 9.2 Undertake targeted community engagement activities.
10. Integrated Planning and Reporting	10.1 Use the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework to create integrated overarching policy directions for all levels of Government in line with community expectations.

KNOWLEDGE

All about understanding; evidence based decision-making; research; economic data

ACTION	HOW
11. Implementation of the outcomes of the Foodsheds Project	<p>11.1 Research food security issues.</p> <p>11.2 Expand current mapping project.</p> <p>11.3 Determine best capacity of land use.</p>
12. Research about peri-urban issues	<p>12.1 Quantify the latent economic value of the peri-urban area of Sydney.</p> <p>12.2 Capture and understand the socio-economic values including rural tourism.</p> <p>12.3 Capture and understand the environmental values of the peri-urban areas.</p> <p>12.4 Undertake research on the comparative costs of infill vs. peri-urban greenfield development.</p>
13. Research about peri-urban solutions	<p>13.1 Explore opportunities through rating mechanisms to support agriculture.</p> <p>13.2 Identify options for land valuation that prioritises food production, environmental and visual landscape values.</p> <p>13.3 Develop mechanisms that assist in the management of conflicting land use issues in the peri-urban area.</p> <p>13.4 Identify economic solutions to the “superannuation” subdivision approach to rural land.</p> <p>13.5 Undertake research of comparable peri-urban areas solutions around other global cities.</p> <p>13.6 Undertake research into feasibility of transferrable development right schemes (or similar).</p> <p>13.7 Explore opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.</p>
14. Ongoing collaboration between member Councils	<p>14.1 Continue to network and meet to exchange experiences and knowledge of peri-urban issues.</p> <p>14.2 Support and educate our elected representatives on peri-urban matters.</p> <p>14.3 Seek opportunities to fund and resource research initiatives.</p> <p>14.4 Encourage other research institutes to connect.</p> <p>14.5 Explore opportunities to partner with member Councils and other organisations.</p>



SPUN

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