

# newsletter



## WE LOVE THIS CITY ! BUT WHERE'S EVERYONE GOING TO LIVE?

It's lucky Sydney has large tracts of parklands, because in the next 30 years we might see the need for tent cities to be established there. Okay, so I'm exaggerating, but with the revised population figures for the year 2036 having risen from 5.3 million five years ago to around six million, we really do have to wonder: where's everyone going to live?

According to a Department of Planning discussion paper, in the next 26 years, the population of the south-west will more than double, and that of the city centre will jump 60%. And whilst the west will soak up most of the extra people, all 10 sub-regions will experience significant growth.

Breaking it down, the south-west sub-region will gain another 464,000 people – that's a whopping increase of 113%. And that's in an area where the transport infrastructure is already sadly lacking. The inner west will gain another 80,000 people, an increase of 35%, whilst the eastern suburbs will rise 19%, that's

52,000 more people. The west-central sub-region, consisting of suburbs such as Auburn, Parramatta and Fairfield, will grow by 217,000 people, or 32%, whilst the northern sub-region including Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai will jump 23%, or 60,000 people.

According to the NSW Government, which last month launched the **Sydney Towards 2036** discussion paper – the first stage in a consultation process to review Sydney's Metropolitan Strategy – Sydney will need an additional 770,000 homes and 760,000 more jobs to respond to this growth.

The discussion paper focuses on things such as providing jobs closer to where most of the people are living, especially in western Sydney, through the revitalisation of several major centres and continuing employment land releases; integrating land-use with transport and infrastructure planning; meeting changing housing needs; and building vibrant and sustainable communities through urban renewal, particularly around key transport hubs. Consultation on Sydney's Metropolitan Strategy discussion paper is running concurrently with the exhibition of the \$50 billion Metropolitan Transport Plan linking land use and transport planning – which closes on 30 April 2010.

Something needs to be done – on many levels. In many areas we're already struggling with the lack of infrastructure (read: roads, transport). Recently I heard a councillor from the western suburbs call radio talkback to lament the lack of transport, and the fact that much of the area's population has one, two, three cars to be able to get family members to and from work and school, to recreation facilities and to do their shopping. How are we going to comfortably accommodate more people if all the powers-that-be do is talk and plan, talk and plan – without actually accomplishing anything tangible.

Plus the Government needs to make life easier for developers in Sydney, to ensure that it's viable to build the homes needed to accommodate more people. In December last year, I mentioned an article which had run in the Sydney Morning Herald – *NSW not a developer's nirvana... it's planning hell*. It was an opinion piece from the Urban Taskforce Australia, and it stated that for the past 10 years developers have increasingly been focusing on areas outside of NSW. With few incentives for developers, a limited supply of land for new developments plus onerous planning approval processes, it's little wonder!

## SUSTAINABLE LIVING INTO THE FUTURE

The dearth of new opportunities for developers in NSW gives further weight to urban renewal projects. So with this in mind, it will be interesting to see what comes out of the 2010 Congress for New Urbanism, which is being held in Adelaide from 27-30 April.

The theme of this year's congress focuses on implementation – **From Plans to Places**, with the aim of connecting the planners of urban environments to the people who construct and live in new urbanism. The collaboration is designed to result in more liveable places and integration of social needs with economic and environmental objectives.

Two of the keynote speakers at the congress will be new urbanism campaigners Stef Polyzoides and Paul Murrain. Stef, who has won multiple awards for excellence, has an international reputation for design and architectural innovation, a strong track record, and his work has been published all over the world and has been showcased in various museum and university exhibitions. And Paul, an urban design consultant and former senior lecturer and course chairman at the Joint Center for Urban Design in Oxford, England, is currently working on several sustainable living projects and has been a member of the Congress for The New Urbanism in the US since its inception in 1992.

The congress is set to be attended by urban designers, architects, planners, regulators, government leaders, engineers, developers, builders, financiers, investors, educators, students and citizens who care about their built environment, their resultant quality of life, and sustainability.

Let's hope that members of the NSW Government and, indeed, Opposition attend the congress and get some hints on how to turn plans into actual projects. I'll bring you news of the outcome of the congress in coming newsletters.

## IT'S GONNA BLOW UNLESS SOMETHING'S DONE

Lack of supply of housing isn't just exclusive to Sydney. With the population of Australia set to hit 36 million by 2050, unless something is done to hasten development, the undersupply of houses could reach 1.4 million. And the resulting pressure on house prices will put purchasing a home out of many people's reach.

The managing director of Stockland, Matthew Quinn, recently gave a scathing criticism of the federal government's first home buyer incentives. Speaking at the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce business lunch in Sydney, Mr Quinn likened housing affordability to a time bomb, and said the federal government had not held an honest dialogue about the issue.

He said that the federal government had created a monster with its boost to the first home owners grant. Now, he said, the monster cannot be deflated. *"Because having put all of these people into home ownership, you can imagine what would happen if they did unleash the supply in one fell swoop and prices dropped, then Tony Abbott's approval ratings would probably be looking pretty good at that stage."*

Mr Quinn said population growth was critical to the economy but the government had not had an honest dialogue or embarked on unpopular, but crucial, reforms. "To have that inevitable outcome and ... have a government that basically says, "This is what the population is going to be, but we can't tell you where you're going to live', that's just negligence."

State governments also copped a spray from Mr Quinn. They just do their own thing, he said, and nobody was counting up and distributing the number of dwellings that needed to be built. Hostile planning systems in the outer suburbs, which were against two-storey dwellings, are leading to sprawling houses and a "ridiculous" misuse of land.

The former NSW Premier Bob Carr was also criticised by Mr Quinn for his claims: "Sydney is full" and "shutting down the planning system", which resulted in rising house prices and forced people to look elsewhere for homes.

Now, Mr Quinn said, is the time to make changes, particularly with Australia shaken by the global financial crisis but still riding high thanks to China.

Great words, but we'll have to wait and see whether they've fallen onto deaf ears.

## SPEAKING OF AVAILABILITY ...

**With Sydney's population continuing to grow, and demand for rental accommodation still high, Charles+Stuart has found itself in an unusual situation. Our property management division has a zero percent vacancy rate – and we're on the lookout for more rental properties to satisfy the demand from tenants.**

**We've been managing properties since 1985, and currently manage almost 1000 properties. Property management was the foundation of Charles+Stuart, and we pride ourselves on doing it well.**

**As proven by our track record, we are committed to finding the best tenant, maximise occupancy rates and rental income and maintain our clients' assets. So we invite you to talk to us about how we can develop a tailored solution based on your individual needs and your property's profile. Don't hesitate to contact our property management team to find out how.**



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