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13 May 2018

Dear Ms Heller,

**RE: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION PAPER – SUBMISSION**

The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) is pleased to provide feedback to the City of Sydney's Social Sustainability Discussion Paper: *Towards a Socially Just and Resilient Sydney* (the Discussion Paper).

The GBCA supports the City of Sydney's vision for a socially sustainable city and our submission addresses the key directions and actions for achieving this vision. Our response is informed by the view that the property industry has a central role to play in the delivery of social sustainability in the City of Sydney. Through the creation of communities, the industry shapes the places where people live, work and play and with this comes a responsibility to improve people's health and wellbeing, deliver shared value and fostering diversity, equity and inclusion.

Please find below our feedback to the questions outlined in the Discussion Paper. The GBCA commends the City for demonstrating leadership in placing social outcomes on the same footing as economic and environmental objectives in addressing the challenges facing its growing population.

The GBCA looks forward to continuing to work closely with the City of Sydney on realising the vision articulated in this plan.

Should you wish to discuss the issues raised in this submission, please contact Sandra Qian, Senior Advisor – Policy and Government Relations on email at [sandra.qian@gbca.org.au](mailto:sandra.qian@gbca.org.au).

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Cartledge  
Head of Public Affairs



Established in 2002, the GBCA is Australia's leading authority on sustainable buildings and communities. We are an industry association committed to developing a sustainable property industry in Australia. Our vision is to create healthy, resilient and positive places for people and the natural environment.

To achieve this, we

- Rate the sustainability of buildings and communities through Australia's only national, voluntary, holistic rating system – Green Star;
- Educate industry and government practitioners and decision makers and promote green building programs, technologies, design practices and operations; and,
- Advocate for the sustainable transformation of the built environment.

The GBCA represents more than 650 individual companies with a collective annual turnover of more than \$40 billion. Our membership reflects the diversity of Australian business, with over 500 small to medium enterprises through to 75 companies with annual turnover of more than \$100 million and 24 companies now listed in the ASX 200, with a combined market capitalisation of more than \$620 billion. Members include major developers, professional services firms, government departments and local councils, banks, superannuation funds, product manufacturers and suppliers.



Green Star assesses the sustainable design, construction and operation of buildings, fitouts and communities. There are four Green Star rating tools available:

- Green Star – Design & As Built
- Green Star – Interiors
- Green Star – Performance
- Green Star – Communities

The rating tools cover a broad range of sustainable topics including energy and emissions and provide an overall rating, with 4-star meaning 'best practice', 5-star meaning 'Australian excellence' and 6-star meaning 'international excellence'. The program is voluntary and covers residential, industrial, office, retail, accommodation, education and public buildings.

Green Star certification is a formal process during which a building, fitout, or precinct is awarded a rating by an independent, third party assessment panel of sustainable development experts through a documentation-based assessment. A Green Star certified rating provides independent verification that a building or community project is sustainable.

While office buildings make up the largest proportion of certified buildings to date, Green Star has been applied to almost every type of building and a wide range of communities from business precincts to communities designed to become home to over 50,000 people.



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## **Towards a Socially Just and Resilient Sydney: Social Sustainability Discussion Paper**

### **What is your vision for a socially just and resilient Sydney?**

The vision for a socially just Sydney as articulated in the Discussion Paper is one that:

“Provides everyone with an equal chance in life. It provides people with access to pathways to prosperity, irrespective of their background.”

The GBCA supports this vision and believes that a socially just and resilient Sydney is characterised by equal access to community resources and opportunities, and by the capacity to adapt and grow, regardless of the stresses and acute shocks imposed by external factors. A socially just and resilient Sydney is equitable, diverse, well connected and democratic, providing a good quality of life for residents. The property industry is critical to realising this vision, by ensuring the design of our built environment supports social and cultural life, social amenities and systems for citizen engagement and spaces for people and places to adapt and evolve.

### **Do you agree with our four strategic directions to create a more socially sustainable city?**

The Discussion Paper sets an ambitious plan to achieve a more socially sustainable city through the four strategic directions of inclusion, connectivity, liveability and engagement. The GBCA supports these directions and believes there is significant scope for the City to collaborate with the private sector in delivering on these objectives. Market leaders in the property sector have demonstrated their ability to deliver projects with greater value, lower operating costs and improved outcomes, including social, economic and environmental outcomes. This opens up many opportunities for the City in terms of providing places which help to enhance social sustainability.

In conceptualising the drivers of social sustainability, we believe it is important to recognise that social sustainability supports and is supported by the other outcomes that create healthy, productive, liveable communities. As such, a socially sustainable city evolves by weaving integrated approaches and actions, including a collaborative approach to development which requires stakeholders to work together towards a common goal. The GBCA has developed a national framework for sustainable communities, in the effort to provide consistency around best practice. Not only does this framework promote integration and collaboration across the spectrum of sustainability issues, it also provides a basis for consistent and ongoing evaluation. We observe that the strategic for achieving social sustainability outlined in the Discussion Plan align with the GBCA’s national principles for creating sustainable communities, as follows:

- Enhance liveability;
- Create opportunities for economic prosperity;
- Foster environmental responsibility;
- Embrace design excellence;
- Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance.

We believe these principles should be considered by the City as it seeks to define and assess socially sustainable outcomes in the development of Sydney’s communities. Our national framework is supported by a rating tool (Green Star – Communities) which sets benchmarks that enable community development projects to be assessed and rated against the framework’s five principles.

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Please see **Appendix** for an illustration of the way Green Star Communities rating tool credits align with the strategic directions outlined in the Discussion Paper.

### **What do you think of the actions we have proposed for each strategic direction?**

The following is an indication of the many ways in which Green Star supports the strategic directions and action outlined in the Discussion Paper. It is by no means exhaustive, but gives an indication of the many projects delivered by leaders in the built environment sector which meet the City's objectives.

#### **Action: Diverse housing tenures and types**

##### **Strategic direction: An inclusive city: social justice and opportunity**

The GBCA agrees with the Discussion Paper that rising accommodation costs have become a significant pressure point for vulnerable residents in Sydney and that a lack of housing affordability is reaching crisis point. Access to affordable housing for low-income households in the city of Sydney is limited, particularly in areas in close proximity to jobs and services.

We commend the City for taking decisive action to address the lack of housing affordability, through making subsidised land sales and setting rental and social housing supply targets. While government has an important role in the provision of social and affordable housing, the potential for market driven mechanisms to support housing diversity should not be overlooked. Offering incentives (financial, procedural or regulatory) to developers and builders that commit to best practice outcomes is an important mechanism which the City could consider as it develops solutions address housing unaffordability. For instance, as part of a market based policy mechanism, the City could offer incentives for initiatives are aligned to housing affordability through the provision of<sup>1</sup>:

- Bonuses and concessions on floor space;
- Car parking concessions;
- Rebates and other financial incentives such as waiving application fees;
- Fast-tracking approvals;
- Marketing and other public relations support for larger scale developments;
- Technical support to developers.

In this context, the GBCA's Green Star Communities national framework can provide a benchmark and means of measuring results. Within the Economic Prosperity category of the GBCA's Green Star rating tool the 'Affordability' credit encourages and rewards projects that promote housing affordability and address the issue of housing stress. Points are awarded based on the number of housing affordability strategies implemented within a project, including lot diversity and affordable housing stock.

Achieving housing affordability is not just about the cost of housing, but also the cost of living. We urge the City to recognise the benefits of ongoing living affordability, through measures such as local food production, sustainable transport, reduced energy and water consumption and provision of local jobs. A good example of how social housing can help reduce financial stress on household income is the Hopkins

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<sup>1</sup> GBCA, 2012, Green Star Communities – Guide for Local Government, Accessed from [https://www.gbca.org.au/uploads/189/2749/Green\\_Star\\_Communities\\_Guide\\_for\\_Local\\_Government\\_For\\_Web.pdf](https://www.gbca.org.au/uploads/189/2749/Green_Star_Communities_Guide_for_Local_Government_For_Web.pdf)

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Street Affordable Housing Project, the first project in Tasmania to achieve a 5 star Green Star – Multi Unit Residential rating. Through the maximisation of energy efficiency via efficient heating, solar hot water systems, efficient insulation and PV panels for communal power needs, it presents a model of energy efficient social housing that is exemplary from both an environmental and an affordability perspective.

### **Social Enterprise for Affordable Housing**

The GBCA has partnered with Homes for Homes to develop the Social Enterprise for Affordable Housing Innovation Challenge which allows developers of residential and commercial Green Star projects to achieve up to two points by generating new funds to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.

The model encourages home owners to donate 0.1 per cent of their sale price to the fund – with a home that sells for \$500,000 equating to a small \$500 donation. The fund then invests in residential projects across the county, from women’s housing in Redfern to low-cost housing in Hobart.

### **Action: Resilience and adaptive capacity**

#### **Strategic direction: An inclusive city: social justice and opportunity**

Sydney, like other major cities is being reshaped by global megatrends, including climate change, demographic change, urbanisation, big data, artificial intelligence and technological innovation. These forces could trigger unexpected events from natural disasters, pandemics and information and communications technology disruptions to economic crises and terrorism. The City’s vulnerability to these shocks will be partly determined by the resilience and adaptability of its built environment, including its infrastructure. For instance, natural weather events such as bushfires, floods or cyclones constitute real threats to buildings in operation. As such, it is important to have design solutions across our built environment to respond and adapt to changing conditions and extreme weather events. Resilient asset should continue working in the face of these external shocks, and should make their local community and surrounding areas more resilient too.

The GBCA recognises the importance of addressing the many layers of resilience in our built environment and we are responding to the challenges by evolving and adapting our suite of Green Star rating tools. As part of the upcoming update for Green Star<sup>2</sup>, we are proposing to expand the scope of our rating tool to recognise the many and varied forms of resilience. This expansion will be guided by our vision for resilient places, which are places ready to address the future impacts of climate change and to respond positively to other changes and shocks. Through Green Star we will affect the transformation of the built environment to deliver assets which are resilient to natural disasters, man-made impacts such as changing technology and demographics, as well as long term risks to its value.

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<sup>2</sup> Green Star Future Focus. For more details visit <http://new.gbca.org.au>

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**Action: Fostering connections with First Nations people and living cultures**

**Strategic direction: A connected city: diverse, cohesive communities**

There are many opportunities for Sydney's buildings to acknowledge the city's Aboriginal heritage and ongoing presence, and promote unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.

As a leading industry body, the GBCA is well positioned to influence how reconciliation, sustainability and the built environment interact and how we can better foster connections with First Nations people and living cultures through the process of place-making.

This year we will be exploring how the Green Star rating system for buildings and communities can recognise and reward placemaking that honours our First Australians. Having recently launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan following 12 months of internal collaboration and consultation with industry, we note that a growing number of our members, such as Lendlease, Stockland, GPT, Grocon and Mirvac have also developed RAPs. These RAPs have had tangible outcome on projects: from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation programs which provide learning and development opportunities for Indigenous Australians, to partnerships with Indigenous owned businesses to consciously supporting a growing number of Indigenous suppliers.

**Sydney Opera House**

In 2015, the Opera House was awarded a 4 Star Green Star – Performance rating, joining a handful of World Heritage-listed buildings to have achieved green certification globally. Its Reconciliation Action Plan, which was awarded Green Star 'Innovation' points, focuses on building relationships, and includes the appointment of a Head of Indigenous Programming, hosting a range of Indigenous arts festivals and workshops to celebrate NAIDOC week and running indigenous history tours.

"At its 40th Anniversary in 2013, the Opera House embarked on a Decade of Renewal. It includes not only major capital works to safeguard the building for future generations, but also work across the organisation to ensure a deeper, richer and more fulfilling experience for 21st century artists, audiences and visitors," says CEO Louise Herron.

"Our RAP is fundamental to achieving this vision. The 2017-19 plan sets out a clear path to further embed reconciliation values across the full spectrum of what the Opera House offers, from art and experiences to education and employment."

**Action: Opportunities to build trust and form social networks**

**Strategic direction: A connected city: diverse, cohesive communities**

Making Sydney a great place to live is more than about accommodating growth, it's also about bringing people together and providing opportunities for social interaction. The quality, design and accessibility of the built environment can influence these outcomes, and serve to strengthen the bonds that define a community. Public spaces, such as libraries, community centres, arts and culture venues, sports and recreation facilities and parks all play a key role in the social life of communities. They enable social inclusion as well as civic engagement and empowerment. They can also create vibrant places that are fundamental to the quality of life for local residents.

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As Sydney densifies in the coming years through population growth, access to public spaces will come under increasing pressure, whilst the need to foster engaged communities continues. The GBCA's Green Star – Communities rating tool recognises the importance of providing spaces and opportunities for communities to come together. Points are awarded for initiatives which foster community participation and engagement. Industry is encouraged to take a holistic, long term view to sustainable development, one which invests in the community by building places that are healthy and encourage active living, and creating opportunities for people to come together.

### **Brookhaven**

Free WIFI in public areas, community gardens, bike trails and complimentary personal training have helped the 1350-lot Brookhaven community in Logan City earn a coveted 5 Star Green Star – Communities rating.

Cameron Leggatt, General Manager Residential Queensland for Frasers Property Australia which developed the community, said the company had sought to achieve the rating from the project's inception.

"We have implemented Green Star's benchmarks from the outset which demonstrates our commitment to delivering on our promise to create a desirable, connected and sustainable home for Brookhaven's residents," Mr Leggatt said.

"The Green Star rating tool represents a broad set of initiatives, from community engagement through to environmental sustainability, which will provide real value to Brookhaven's residents.

"Brookhaven will be a connected, vibrant community with natural beauty at its core, and this rating shows how seriously we have considered its master plan."

Brookhaven earned the 5 Star Green Star rating based on the following:

- A dedicated online community portal to welcome residents to the Brookhaven community
- Free WIFI in communal areas
- Green features including LED street lighting, tree retention and stormwater harvesting from surrounding brooks
- Community gardens, meandering brooks and multiple parks
- Network of trails to promote walking, running and mountain biking
- A dedicated community development manager to facilitate and deliver community programs including events and initiatives
- Free personal training five days a week to help residents engage with their community while getting fit
- A range of sustainability tools and programs available to people building a new home at Brookhaven

## Appendix : Green Star – Communities Rating Tool

Credit Name	Aim of Credit	City of Sydney's Action/Strategic Direction
<b>National Communities Framework Principle: Governance</b>		
<b>Corporate Responsibility</b>	To encourage and recognise projects developed by proponents with defined corporate responsibility values	
<b>Sustainability Awareness</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that enhance community and industry knowledge and understanding of sustainability	Civic knowledge and skills (Engaged City)
<b>Engagement</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that develop and implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy, specific to the project	Balanced and inclusive local decision making (Engaged City)
<b>Operational Governance</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that establish community ownership and management arrangement for facilities, programs and infrastructure	Transparent, accountable governance; Balanced and Inclusive local decision making (Engaged City)
<b>Adaptation and Resilience</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that are resilient to the impacts of a changing climate and natural disasters	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City)
<b>Environmental Management</b>	To encourage and recognise the adoption of formal environmental management practices.	Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)

Credit Name	Aim of Credit	City of Sydney's Strategic Direction
<b>GBCA National Communities Framework Principle: Design</b>		
<b>Urban Design</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that apply world-class urban design practices to their developments	People focused urban design and planning (Liveable City)
<b>GBCA National Communities Framework Principle: Economic Prosperity</b>		
<b>Employment and Economic Resilience</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that have access to local and diverse employment opportunities	Social justice: inclusive growth and opportunities (Inclusive City)
<b>Education and skills development</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that provide a range of education and skills development opportunities	Civic knowledge and skills (Engaged city); Social justice: inclusive growth and opportunities (Inclusive City)
<b>Community Investment</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that invest in infrastructure within the development for community benefit.	Sense of belonging and connection to place; Harmony and social

		cohesion; Diverse thriving communities (Connected City)
<b>Affordability</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that promote housing and living affordability.	Social justice: inclusive growth and opportunities; Affordable Services, programs and facilities (Inclusive City)
<b>Incentive Programs</b>	To recognise and encourage projects that provide incentives to encourage sustainable practices that reduce the cost of living and working	Affordable services, programs and facilities; Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Civic knowledge and skills (Engaged City)
<b>Digital Economy</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that use digital infrastructure to create greater efficiencies in the connection of goods, services, people and information	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City)
<b>Peak Electricity Demand</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce the need for electricity infrastructure augmentation to address growing peak electricity demand.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City)
<b>GBCA National Communities Framework Principle: Liveability</b>		
<b>Access to amenities</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that provide a high level of access to key amenities.	People focused urban design and planning; Accessible places and spaces; Quality natural environment and climate; Healthy active living  Safe and secure communities (Liveable City)
<b>Community Development</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that engage in community development activities.	Supported social networks and trust; Sense of belonging and connection to place; Harmony and social cohesion; Diverse thriving communities; Vibrant creative life (Connected City)
<b>Healthy and Active Living</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that promote healthy and active living.	Healthy active living (Liveable City)
<b>Access to Fresh Food</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that provide access to local food production and distribution opportunities	Resilience and adaptive capacity; Affordable services, programs and facilities (Inclusive City)
<b>Safe Places</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce the likelihood of crime.	Safe and secure communities (Liveable City)
<b>Culture, Heritage and Identity</b>	To encourage and recognise the interpretation and celebration of places with cultural heritage significance	Sense of belonging and connection to place; Diverse thriving communities;

		Harmony and social cohesion (Connected City)
<b>Accessibility and Adaptability</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that deliver housing and spaces that promote dignified access for all persons.	Accessible places and spaces (Liveable City)
<b>GBCA National Communities Framework Principle: Environment</b>		
<b>Site Sensitivity</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that avoid or minimise impacts on environmentally sensitive sites	Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Ecological Enhancement</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that enhance the ecological value of the site.	Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Heat Island Effect</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce heat island effect.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Light Pollution</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that minimise the adverse impacts of light emissions.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that minimise the greenhouse gas intensity of energy supplied to the community	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Green Buildings</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that deliver green buildings within the development.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Potable Water Consumption</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that minimise consumption of potable water.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Stormwater</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that minimise the adverse stormwater impacts of urban development on receiving water bodies.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Materials (applicable only to infrastructure and public works)</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce the environmental impact of material consumption.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Waste Management</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce the environmental impact of waste.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)
<b>Transport</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that reduce the environmental impact of transportation.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City); Quality natural environment and climate (Liveable City)

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**GBCA National Communities Framework Principle: Innovation**

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<b>Innovation</b>	To encourage and recognise projects that adopt innovation in the planning, design and delivery of communities.	Resilience and adaptive capacity (Inclusive City)
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