

Greater Sydney Commission
PO Box 257
Parramatta
NSW 2124

31 March 2017

Dear Commissioners,

Re: Greater Sydney Region Plan and Draft District Plans

The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) commends the Greater Sydney Commission on its commitment to the sustainable management of change and growth in Greater Sydney through its Draft District Plans and the Greater Sydney Region Plan, 'Towards our Greater Sydney 2056'.

The GBCA, established in 2002, is an industry association committed to developing buildings, cities and communities that are productive, liveable, healthy, resilient and sustainable:

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

The GBCA represents over 675 members from across industry and including 44 local governments, 26 state government departments and land organisations, and 18 universities. With a collective turnover of more than \$40 billion and employing more than 50,000 staff, our industry membership reflects the diversity of Australian business with over 500 small-to-medium enterprises through to 75 companies each with annual turnover of more than \$100 million. Industry members include major developers, professional services firms, banks, superannuation funds, product manufacturers, retailers and suppliers.

The GBCA appreciates the opportunity to provide comment as part of the public consultation on the Draft District Plans and Greater Sydney Region Plan. Our comments are as follows:

1. *The GBCA supports the overarching vision and aspirations set in the Greater Sydney Region Plan and Draft District Plans.*

The GBCA commends the Greater Sydney Region Plan and Draft District Plans, which provide a long-term vision for the sustainable growth and development of Greater Sydney. 'Towards our Greater Sydney 2056' provides a sustainable vision of the Western City, the Central City and the Eastern City. With each conceived as a 30-minute city the plans appropriately emphasise the need to prioritise the delivery of economic and employment benefits while also increasing the resilience and liveability of our communities. Leveraging major infrastructure investments, like that through effective integrated strategic planning in the West and Southwest Districts via the Western Sydney Airport will help mitigate geographic and economic inequities, characterised by a concentration of high-wage jobs and services in the CBD.

The GBCA applauds the proposal to make Greater Sydney a net zero carbon emissions city by 2050, aligning with the broader goals of state government as outlined in the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework. The GBCA offers its support with the implementation of key actions, to place Sydney on the trajectory to realising this aspiration as soon as possible.

2. *The Green Star – Communities rating tool provides a useful resource for the Greater Sydney Commission in a number of ways:*

The Green Star – Communities rating tool, established in 2012 as the only holistic, voluntary rating tool for communities and precincts of its kind in Australia, now has a proven track record in delivering concrete outcomes and benefits across a range of projects. Notably, government land organisations nationwide including UrbanGrowth NSW, sponsored its development. The rating tool provides a comprehensive framework against which to measure the outcomes delivered to local communities.

Developed in consultation with industry and all levels of government, the Green Star – Communities rating tool is based on five best practice principles which are to:

1. Enhance liveability
2. Create opportunities for economic prosperity
3. Foster environmental responsibility
4. Embrace design excellence
5. Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance.

Across Australia there are now 25 precinct and community-scale projects that have achieved Green Star – Communities certification, and the GBCA is working with a further 24 projects. The rating tool is currently influencing the design and delivery of major community developments around the country – from Barangaroo South in the Sydney CBD, which will house 23,000 workers each day, to Aura on the Sunshine Coast that will be home to 50,000 people, to Willowdale in Western Sydney.

2.1 *The Green Star – Communities rating tool provides a means of measuring, delivering and communicating sustainable outcomes delivered for the community.*

The District Plans sets an ambitious vision of creating productive, sustainable and liveable cities in Greater Sydney. Vital to the success of the District Plans, will be the effectiveness and transparency with which it delivers, measures and communicates concrete outcomes under the framework of productivity, sustainability and liveability. The GBCA commends the Green Star – Communities rating tool as an effective pathway for delivering, measuring and evaluating such outcome.

2.2 *The Green Star – Communities rating tool can assist with the implementation of key actions identified in the District Plans.*

The Green Star – Communities rating tool provides a useful resource as the Greater Sydney Commission works with stakeholders to identify areas that will potentially demonstrate low carbon-high environmental efficiency. Furthermore, Green Star– Communities can inform key documents that will be developed by the Department of Planning, including the Development Code for Priority Growth Areas and the Guidelines that will inform the planning of new communities in land release areas.

As previously noted, the Green Star– Communities rating tool provides a robust means of delivering and measuring sustainable outcomes for local communities, with the assurance of third-party verification. This is particularly useful as the Greater Sydney Commission pursues actions to maximise the sustainability of developments in government-led urban renewal areas, priority precincts and priority growth areas. Green Star – Communities provides a proven pathway, having been tested in greenfield, brownfield and infill development contexts.

Willowdale: Connected, sustainable, affordable

Willowdale, a case study in Western Sydney¹, provides a prime example having been awarded a 6 Star Green Star – Communities rating.

Willowdale is providing a range of housing options to appeal to a diverse range of buyers, and making a marked impact on affordability in Sydney by providing home sites and new townhouses below the comparable median prices of surrounding suburbs. Willowdale is also providing residents with convenient access to new and existing infrastructure, such as nearby schools, numerous local retail, dining, entertainment and employment precincts outside the community, and the new Leppington Train Station, which is located less than 1.5 kilometres away via a shared walkway and cycleway. Construction will soon commence on Willowdale neighbourhood shopping centre and there is a proposal for a state primary school to be developed within the 350 hectare community.

“Willowdale’s proximity to the new Leppington Train Station scored well in the Green Star – Communities rating tool because it will offer residents an easy commute into Liverpool, Parramatta and the Sydney CBD,” says Gavin Tonnet, Stockland’s General Manager Residential NSW. “It makes it viable and affordable for people to live in a home that offers a more predictable commute, which means residents will spend less time in traffic and more time with their families.

4. Green Star– Communities helps to facilitate an improved understanding of natural hazards and coordinated responses that reduce risk.

As noted in the District Plans, the Greater Sydney Commission will work with stakeholders to adopt a range of tools, resources and implement actions to adapt to climate change and reduce risks to public and private assets. Green Star – Communities provides a useful resource as it contains specific credits that promote climate resilience. Effectively, the resilience credits allow for the recognition of community-scale projects that produce project-specific Climate Adaptation Plans and Community Resilience Plans to address preparation during-and post-disaster communication, safety and response. Furthermore, Green Star – Communities incentivises project to minimise impacts on environmentally sensitive sites, to reduce environment impacts of construction materials, to reduce and effectively manage storm-water runoff and to encourage water sensitive design. These are just a few examples of credits that address the challenge of increasing climate resilience.

Aura: Healthy, resilient, productive

The case study of Aura in Caloundra South Queensland² is a prime example that demonstrates how Green Star – Communities promotes climate resilience. It exemplifies that we can create healthy and productive communities while respecting, protecting and restoring the environmental systems upon which we rely. At Aura, more than 700 hectares, nearly one-third of the site, will be rehabilitated from decades of use as a former pine plantation and designated as a conservation area. Furthermore, Aura will feature the most advanced water reticulation, filtration, storage and treatment system ever installed in any Australian community. This will recycle water, minimise run-off and ensure the protection of the nearby Pumicestone Passage. Notably, while protecting the environment, Aura will provide housing to approximately 50,000 people and will be the largest mixed-use development ever undertaken under single ownership in Australia.

¹ https://www.propertycouncil.com.au/Web/Content/News/National/2016/Sustainable_showcase_in_south_west_Sydney.aspx

² <http://new.gbca.org.au/showcase/projects/aura/>

5. Green Star rating tools provides a pathway for increasing the efficiency of our cities and reducing our carbon footprint while increasing productivity.

As outlined in the District Plans, it is important to increase the efficiency of our cities, focusing on the progressive reduction in carbon emissions, potable water use and waste. The District Plans specify two key actions which include:

- Embedding the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework into local planning decisions
- Supporting the development of initiatives for a sustainable low carbon future

The use of Green Star rating tools for buildings, in addition to Green Star – Communities, provides a practical pathway for implementing these two actions. Launched in 2003, Green Star was developed by the Australian industry for the Australian industry. The Green Star rating system is designed to take a holistic approach within each class and building sector, addressing nine categories in total; Management, Indoor Environment Quality (IEQ), Energy, Water, Materials, Land Use and Ecology, Emissions, Transport and Innovation. A commitment to Green Star certification demonstrates a commitment to healthier, more productive, sustainable and resilient places for people that are also future-proofed and cost less to operate. As a consequence, more than 1,400 projects around the country have achieved certification. Projects can be awarded a 4 Star rating ('Best Practice'), a 5 Star rating ('Australian Excellence') or a 6 Star rating ('World Leadership').

The Value of Green Star: A decade of environmental benefits (2013) report found that Green Star-certified buildings produce 62% fewer greenhouse gas emissions, use 66% less electricity and consume 51% less potable water than average Australian buildings. The broad application of Green Star means that it supports and complements the actions identified in the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework and Draft Plan to Save NSW Energy and Money.³

6. The GBCA is well placed to assist with the development of environmental targets and benchmarks.

As noted in the District Plans, the Greater Sydney Commission will support the development of environmental performance targets and benchmarks. The GBCA appreciates the opportunity to have worked with the Commission through the Environmental Panel and welcomes further opportunities for collaboration. The GBCA can leverage its experience and expertise to contribute to the development of environmental performance targets and benchmarks. Equipped with robust metrics, Green Star rating tools are significantly driving improvements in the energy and water efficiency of buildings and communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing value for money with broader benefits for building owners and tenants, the environment, and communities.

The GBCA commends the Greater Sydney Commission on its *Greater Sydney Region Plan and Draft District Plans*, providing an effective and comprehensive plan for the sustainable management of future growth in Greater Sydney. We encourage the Greater Sydney Commission to work collaboratively with us to assist with achieving the sustainable vision embodied in these plans. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone on (02) 8239 6200, or via email at jonathan.cartledge@gbca.org.au for further information.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Cartledge
Senior Manager – Government & Industry

³ Read the Green Building Council of Australia's submission at: www.gbca.org.au