

SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION DRAFT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BIODIVERSITY POLICY

21 OCTOBER 2011

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission on the Consultation Draft of the Australian Government's Biodiversity Policy to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

UDIA is the peak body representing the property development industry throughout Australia. Our goal is to secure the economic prosperity and future of the development industry in Australia, recognizing that national prosperity is dependent on our success in housing our communities and building and rebuilding cities for future generations.

Our members cover a wide range of specialist and industry fields, including: Developers, Valuers, Planners, Engineers, Architects, Marketers, Researchers, Project Managers, Surveyors, Landscape Architects, Community Consultants, Environmental Consultants, Lawyers, Sales and Marketing Professionals, Financial Institutions, State and Local Government Authorities, and Product Suppliers.

UDIA welcomes the opportunity to participate in this consultation process. The Institute's membership has increasingly embraced projects which protect and preserve biodiversity. Our efforts are largely as a result of industry-driven innovation and initiatives in sustainability practice and also in response to legislation enacted by government agencies. The development industry's commitment to sustainability is strongly evidenced by its adoption and promotion of the EnviroDevelopment initiative, which through an independent certification process recognises sustainable developments that meet defined standards well above regulation.

The urban development industry welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to work with governments, industry and the community in the delivery of biodiversity policy. UDIA believes that any biodiversity policy should aim toward achieving the triple bottom line of sustainability in the decision-making process, giving due consideration to economic, social and environmental factors. The consultation draft seems to strike a balance between these factors and UDIA broadly supports the principles set out in the draft.

The Government should be commended for Principle #1 - its intent to move from a reactionary approach to biodiversity protection to a system of preventative action. By pursuing preventative action decision makers will need to be informed by current scientific evidence. Principle #8 acknowledges the need for credible information and knowledge as the drivers of good decisions and UDIA looks forward to this principal guiding the delivery of policy.

The consultation draft's Principle #5 characterises biodiversity as a complex issue affected by social, economic and environmental factors. This requires a shared responsibility and the need for an integrated approach to biodiversity conservation. UDIA is committed to play its part in this regard and the value we place on biodiversity is evidenced through innovative initiatives such as EnviroDevelopment as well as our ongoing participation in consultation processes with Government.

Through Principle #10 the Government makes a commitment to work cooperatively with states and territories on complementary approaches to environmental legislation. UDIA is highly supportive of this goal as the current regime is highly unsatisfactory. Industry is hopeful that a complementary approach will streamline the approval process and eliminate policy conflict which inevitably results in lengthy delays and has a negative impact on land supply and the cost of housing.

Concluding Remarks

UDIA would like to thank the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities for the opportunity to provide this submission. We also appreciate the invitations to participate in the various roundtables and workshops. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission in greater detail. For further information, please contact James Voortman on 02 6230 0255 or at udia@udia.com.au.