

JENNIFER WESTACOTT, DIRECTOR GENERAL, DIPNR - SYDNEY FUTURES FORUM
Tuesday, 18 May 2004

My role this afternoon is to set the scene for the forum. I want to explain the purpose of the forum, outline how the forum will be run, outline what will happen after the forum and provide some context for the next day and a half. I will also be the statistical aide memoir to those who have not read their folders.

The purpose of the forum is to begin a dialogue about the development of a new metropolitan strategy. The metropolitan strategy will be used to manage future growth and change in the greater Sydney metropolitan region. The aim of the forum is to get the views of experts in the community on the future of Sydney.

By way of context, the government, and more particularly the Minister, have provided a Ministerial Directions Paper which you have all received in your kit. The paper outlines the ideas from the government on the issues we need to focus on, some of the challenges we face, some immediate priorities and actions, and some areas for further debate and discussion. This document is designed to kick-start the sessions and we want your feedback on these ideas. Our priority for this forum is to get practical, effective and realistic actions which can be included in a plan for the future of Sydney.

Commencing the Dialogue

The key focus of the forum, as Brian said, is the working groups. These groups reflect the key themes addressed in the directions paper. Information on the working group sessions is provided in your forum kit and Brian, after we have our formal speeches today, will talk about some of the housekeeping arrangements about where the working groups will be meeting. The working groups are an opportunity to talk about the issues outlined in the directions paper. The groups will focus on testing the propositions in the paper, identifying major issues, identifying gaps, and identifying priorities for the short, medium and long term. To provide some food for thought for these groups there are a number of keynote addresses. First will be Professor Ed Blakely, who is the Chair of the Metropolitan Strategy Reference Panel. He will be followed by the Minister, Craig Knowles. Tomorrow the Premier will address the forum, as will our new sustainability commissioner Professor Peter Newman.

We have chosen all of you to participate in this forum because of your interests, your expertise and your opinions. We have slotted you into specific working groups based on your background. But I want to emphasise that the forum is not a one-off opportunity. You will have more chances to contribute. It is our intention to hold another forum in November where we will get the opportunity to bring together all the work that we have done over the next six months.

Where Have We Come From?

Part of my job today is to put some context to our work over the next day and a half. I particularly want to put some of the key facts on the table which are critical in the planning for Sydney. I also want to draw the distinction between the issues we faced in the 1940s when Sydney had its first plan and those we face today. In short, the issues are more complex, the easy options have all been exhausted and the importance of being inclusive in the development of the plan has never been more critical. There has of course been a metropolitan strategy for Sydney since the 1940s. Work commenced on the first strategy, the County of Cumberland plan, in 1947.



At that time Sydney's population was 1.7 million people and it occupied a relatively small area, located close to rail and bus networks. Car ownership was very low and most people used public transport, or walked to get to work. Only 8 per cent of peak-hour work trips were made by car. This was linked to the high concentrations of jobs in the CBD. Three-quarters of the workforce lived within 10 kilometres of the GPO.

The county plan was prepared in a time of low population growth. It introduced a greenbelt which defined the parameters of the city. By the mid-1960s a new strategy was needed because of the pressures of growth on land and housing. The second metropolitan strategy, the Sydney Region Outline Plan, was released in 1968.



This plan anticipated a population of 5.5 million people by the year 2000. While there have been metropolitan strategy documents which have followed the outline plan, it has provided the basic growth directions which have shaped the Sydney of today. We have now reached the point where the outline plan's urban growth corridors have been developed or largely committed.



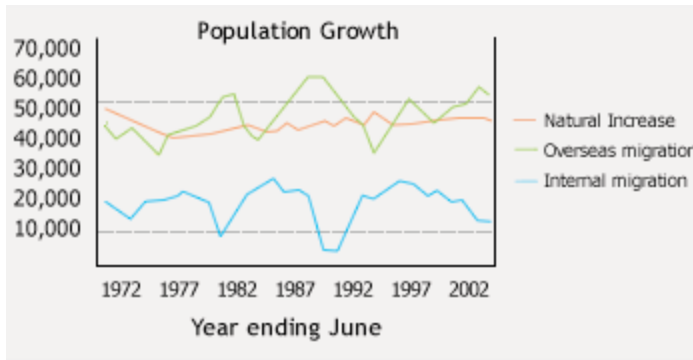
Our challenge now is not only to accommodate continued growth but to respond to the dramatic changes in our demography and to maintain and enhance our quality of life, our competitiveness and our environment.

The Geographic Scope

So let us begin by examining the changes which have occurred in Sydney since 1947 and which drive us to rethink the next 20, 30 and 50 years. In 1947, Sydney had half of the state's population. The state has become a lot more urbanised since then. The Sydney region now has 63 per cent of the state's population. The area we call the Greater Metropolitan Region, that is, the area from Port Stephens to Kiama, is now home to three-quarters of the state's population. So while there is an inevitable focus in metropolitan planning on Sydney, we clearly recognise the significance and the role of all the metropolitan areas in the Greater Metropolitan Region. It is worth noting that Newcastle, the Central Coast and Wollongong are amongst the 10 biggest urban centres in Australia.

Sydney's Growth

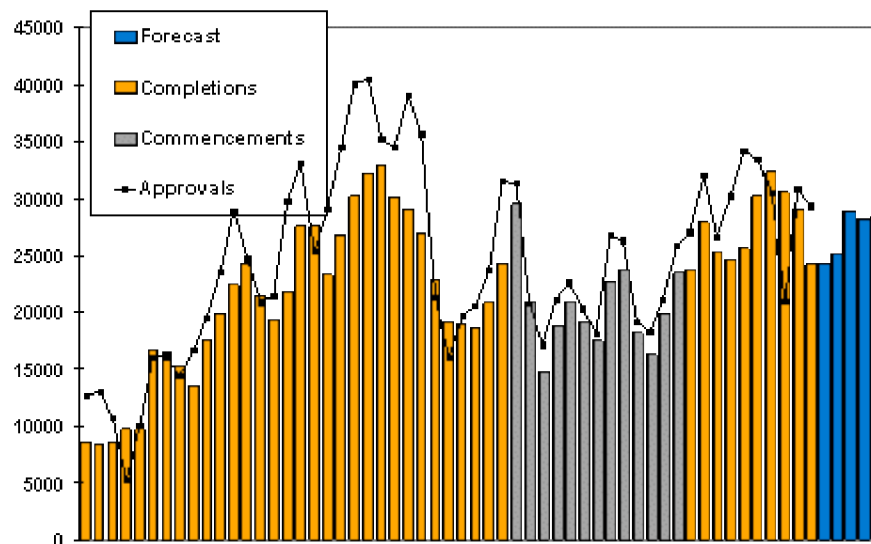
Since 1947, the Sydney region has more than doubled its population. It is now 4.1 million people. The sources of growth are also changing. Between the 1940s and the 1960s, 53 per cent of Sydney's growth was from immigration. By comparison, over the last 10 years 65 per cent of Sydney's growth has been the result of natural increases, that is, the number of births over deaths. New population projections recently released by my department show that the population for the Sydney region could reach 7.4 million people by 2051 and by that time the state's population could be 10 million people.



Housing the Growth

These population changes have had a dramatic impact on the demand for housing and this is one of the key drivers for any plan for Sydney. This graph shows the number of dwellings approved, built and forecast in the future. Based on the department's data, the likely level of supply needed over the next 10 years is 25,000 dwellings 15 per year. That is nearly 500 new houses a week.

Dwelling Supply in Sydney 1948 - 2008



Increasing use of Land

Not only do we need to plan for more people, we need to plan for a dramatic change in the types of households which characterise Sydney. The land we have identified in metropolitan strategies over recent years has not housed as many people as the planners anticipated. One reason for that is the fall in the number of people living in each dwelling. The average size of Sydney households dropped from 4.7 people in 1947 to 3.3 in 1971. Since 1981 it has dropped from 2.9 to 2.7 people. This means more housing is needed to house the same population.

A Changed Economy

If I can turn now to the changes in our economy. The changes in our labour are critical to transport and settlement patterns. The characteristics of the economy and employment have dramatically changed over the last 50 years. In 1947 manufacturing was the dominant sector of the economy. The service sector is now the

most significant. In my slide the service sector is represented by the retail and wholesale categories and the finance and property categories. The location of jobs has also changed. While in the 1940s jobs were mostly located around the CBD jobs are now much more spread across the region. They have followed the spread of the population and the desire of industry for bigger sites. For example, there are now 80 jobs per 100 workers living in greater Western Sydney compared to 67 jobs per 100 workers in 1971.

Sydney Now

Sydney is now a city of many cities. So, where do we stand now after the growth and change which has occurred over the last half century? The outlook is very positive. In 1947 Sydney was just one of many moderate sized cities around the world playing out a role in its domestic context. Now it is acknowledged as a truly global city contributing 23 per cent of the nation's economic output. As I say, as someone who has just spent three years living in Melbourne, we have shifted from worrying about how we compare to Melbourne and are now focused on how we compete with cities such as Tokyo and Singapore.

So it is against this backdrop that we have organised the forum to focus on a number of key issues. Those issues drive the working groups in our detailed work over the next day and a half, indeed our detailed work over the next six months. How do we manage growth? How do we accommodate choices in housing types and location? How do we make our communities more liveable, how do we accommodate urban renewal and regeneration, how do we support our economic centres? How do we preserve the links with the regions? How do we keep Sydney competitive? How do we conserve our natural resources? How do we preserve our green landscapes and urban greenspaces, how do we improve our coordination of transport, and how do we finance the city?

So where to after today? This first Sydney Futures Forum is a critical step in beginning the dialogue with experts in the community. As you can see by my slide, we envisage an intensive process over the next six months. This will involve a ministerial forum with all of the mayors and general managers in the metropolitan region. This will be the first step in validating and testing our work over the next day and a half. This will also involve the ideas from this forum, today and tomorrow and the forum of the mayors and general managers will see the production of a discussion paper which will be released to provide further opportunities for the community to have their say. All of our work over the next day and a half, our community and technical workshops and our forum with Sydney's 10 mayors will come together for review at the second Sydney Futures Forum in November. We will then complete the strategy by December.

So our focus over the next day and a half is practical and achievable change. We do not want a planners book. We want ideas and suggestions which provide a context for the investment and service priorities of all levels of government and for industry