Dear Ms Heller,

Subject: Regional Development Australia (RDA) Sydney submission to City of Sydney’s Social Sustainability Discussion Paper and Draft Policy March 2016

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to offer feedback on this very important strategy.

The RDA Sydney Committee recently reviewed its strategic priorities with its new Strategic Goal 2 being to ‘seek to influence government to make Sydney a liveable city with affordable housing, amenity, improved wellbeing and social equity’ so the release of this discussion paper and draft policy is very timely from our perspective.

RDA Sydney provides a whole of Sydney focus in its submissions as it is important that all regions of the Sydney metropolitan area are performing at their optimum to achieve success as a global city.

In this submission we will provide general comment regarding the discussion paper and the draft policy and as mentioned previously we will take a whole of Sydney view with the acknowledgement that the City of Sydney has a pivotal role in influencing and providing leadership in their areas of expertise to the whole of the Sydney metropolitan area.

Engagement of Non-residents

The Discussion Paper refers to the community as residents, workers, students and visitors however and understandably, the focus of the four strategic directions seems to be on the Council’s relationship with its residents and the actions that could be taken to achieve the required outcomes.

The document does not clearly explain how engagement would occur with non-residents, as this group is the majority of the daily population, it is vital that their engagement is well planned or it may compromise the City of Sydney’s ability to achieve its goals.

RDA Sydney recommends that an engagement strategy of non-residents be included in any final documents; covering both those who own businesses and work in the city but also the vast majority of other Sydney siders to which the City of Sydney is their CBD, where they visit.
Definition of Wellbeing

The Discussion Paper frequently refers to wellbeing in several contexts such as ‘social wellbeing’ and ‘collective wellbeing’ and it makes reference to the City of Sydney’s biannual reports on community wellbeing but the actual definition is not stated in the document so it is not very clear what is meant by wellbeing and how it is measured. RDA Sydney recommends a clear definition of wellbeing and the measurements of success be included in the finalised plan/documents in the form of a relative times series index compared if possible to other cities?

Four Strategic Directions

RDA Sydney supports the four strategic directions but would like to recommend that direction two: A connected city: diverse, cohesive communities be broadened to include a statement regarding the City of Sydney’s connectedness to the rest of Sydney and the important role it plays. RDA Sydney also recommends that direction four: An engaged city: good governance and active participation includes a statement that describes the City of Sydney’s metropolitan wide leadership role in achieving social sustainability.

Vision for a Socially Just and Resilient Sydney

RDA Sydney supports the suggested components of the vision but recommends an additional sentence ‘it’s a city that has a pivotal role in contributing to individual wellbeing of people throughout the Sydney region’.

Draft Social Sustainability Policy

Overall the draft policy is supported by RDA Sydney however we strongly encourage the City of Sydney to strengthen their statements regarding leadership and influence to include a Sydney wide role.

If you have any questions regarding this feedback please do not hesitate to Therese O’Dwyer, our Senior Policy and Projects Manager on 0413 834 098.

Thank you once again for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Germaine
Executive Officer
Regional Development Australia Sydney