

9 – Urban design and transport

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Australian cities are under pressure as a result both of global climate change and their heavy dependency on oil. The goal of sustainable urban development is to reduce the ecological footprint of the population while simultaneously improving the quality of urban life. Our cities are currently among the world's worst consumers of transport energy. Car dependency is inherent in policy thinking across the nation but there are growing efforts to change this. We need to create viable population centres that will support enhanced public transport systems. This means increasing the population density of parts of the cities. New funding and policy are needed to move cities towards sustainability. Australian building approval processes need to specify reduced energy and water use and ways need to be found to involve community members in ownership of the transition to sustainability.

Sustainability arises from a new sense of limits, that the globe's ecosystems, resources such as oil and the climate system, are being overstretched. Most of this impact is coming from the world's cities. Sustainability approaches such limits with a positive mindset, believing that opportunities can be created to achieve economic and community gain while reducing our ecological and resource impacts. In this way sustainability in settlements can be seen as an opportunity to reduce our ecological footprint whilst simultaneously improving the quality of urban life.

There are three main limits that have emerged in Australian settlements in recent years:

- **Water**, where nearly every major city in the country has had to institutionalise processes to reduce water consumption, and some scenarios of serious long-term supply difficulties due to greenhouse-induced climate change have emerged for our cities