Better Planning Network Inc.

2026 Annual General Meeting
5 December 2026

Annual Report from the BPN Leadership Group

Better Planning Network was established in 2012 in response to the then NSW Government's proposed planning changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. BPN has continued to strongly advocate on behalf of the community. BPN is well respected in the halls of power. While we do not have as much influence as we would like with the current NSW Government and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, we continue to make a considerable difference on many issues.

BPN has been fortunate to have a stable Leadership Group for the past two years, which includes a diverse range of people from metropolitan and regional NSW with divergent political views. It is encouraging that when it comes to better planning, consensus can always be achieved.

ACTIVITIES:

Representatives of the BPN Leadership Group continue to attend Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) bi-monthly stakeholder meetings. BPN continues to raise pertinent and often difficult questions and provide input on behalf of our members, which has often resulted in policy amendments. There were changes made to the makeup of these meetings during the year, which resulted in BPN being put into the “Community” meetings, alongside the National Trust. However as a result BPN has now increased the number of its representatives at these meetings, an outcome we're sure DPHI didn't anticipate.

In the 2025-2026 period, substantial submissions were made on the following exhibitions:

- Draft NSW Heritage Strategy
- Changes to Deter Illegal Tree and Vegetation Clearing
- Legislative Council Select Committee on Access Restrictions to Public Lands and Waterways
- Inquiry into Rural Housing and Second Dwellings reform
- Cherrybrook Metro rezoning
- NSW National Parks Establishment Plan
- Establishing the Development Coordination Authority
- The Sydney Plan
- A new Approach to Strategic Planning

- Proposed changes to the Biodiversity Offsets Payment Calculator
- Climate Change SEPP, Guidelines and Policy
- Statewide Community Participation Plan – *notable changes were made in final document*
- Low Rise Housing reforms and Targeted Assessment Developments
- Variations to Complying Development Explanation of Intended Effects
- Improving Development Assessment
- Standard and Model Conditions of Consent Explanation of Intended Effects
- Independent Pricing Commission Inquiry into Housing Supply

A phenomenal effort by the Leadership Team. In addition, BPN circulated various submission guides to its members to assist them in making submissions on various exhibitions.

Many of these exhibitions were as a result of the changes made by the NSW Government last year to the EP&A Act, under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Amendment Bill 2025*, which was for the most part supported by the NSW Opposition. The scope of these changes is wide-ranging, providing unprecedented control for the Minister and DPHI to make reforms, and we haven't seen the last of these reforms yet. Some of the reforms have been enacted while some, such as the Changes to deter Illegal Tree and Vegetation Clearing have not yet been gazetted.

DOING DENSITY BETTER CAMPAIGN:

Many of the planning reforms have been designed to facilitate major increases in density across Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong and the surrounding regional areas, by reducing so-called red and green tape that developers maintain restricts housing supply. BPN maintains that simply deregulating planning and increasing density targets, will not improve housing affordability. There are many other factors, including the construction sector's productivity collapse, the cost and availability of finance, the labour and materials pipeline, and the absence of infrastructure ahead of rezoning.

As a result of widespread concerns, communities in impacted areas became very vocal in their opposition to, in particular, State Significant Development (SSD) and the Low and Mid-rise Housing Policy (LMR). BPN was subsequently approached by several community groups asking whether BPN could assist. A sub-committee of BPN has therefore been created whose sole focus is inappropriate increases in density. Doing Density Better is run by a 7-person sub-committee which meets on a weekly basis. It has been formed under the BPN Constitution and is therefore subject to the rules of the Constitution. Membership of BPN is a requisite for joining DDB and any current BPN member group is eligible at no extra cost to take part in their activities, attend their monthly community group meetings, join their WhatsApp group, and be kept up to date with their activities.

Their Facebook page is https://www.facebook.com/p/Doing-Density-Better-61590305767232 Several DDB member group rallies have already been held across Sydney and the wider regions with more planned in the run up to the NSW State election.

COMMUNICATION:

The BPN Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/betterplanningnetworkinc - continues to grow its followers with posts being uploaded every day or so. Where member groups have relevant FB posts, BPN continues to share them.

The new website page is active - https://www.betterplanningnetwork.org.au

MEMBERSHIP:

Most BPN members renewed their membership for the 2026/2027 year, having been provided with a year's free membership for 2025/2026.

There has been a significant increase in BPN membership, due partly to word of mouth but also as a result of the many community groups joining the Doing Density Better campaign.

JOIN THE LEADERSHIP GROUP:

BPN is fortunate to have the current Leadership Group renominating for the 2027 Leadership Group. However, more hands make light work. Next year will be crucial in the run up to the NSW State election. Please consider helping our campaigns by nominating for the Leadership Group or offering to lend a hand.

CONCLUSION:

BPN has made a substantial number of submissions to the NSW Government throughout the year, with many exhibition periods overlapping each other making it difficult to keep up to date with these important submissions.

Our sub-committee, Doing Density Better has been enthusiastic, energetic and on-point with its relentless campaign against inappropriate density increases and their impacts. Community group meetings and rallies will continue, particularly in the run up to the NSW State election.

The coming year holds great hope of getting our voices heard before the election, as all political parties nervously watch the polls and try to get voters onside. An increased cross-bench is highly likely.

We hope that you will join us in continuing to interrogate the Government's planning reforms and to make better planning an achievable goal. Because,

We're stronger together.

On behalf of the BPN Leadership Group

Jan Primrose, Convenor

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