

Daley right to focus on planning for Sydney's growth

SMH 15 January 2019
EDITORIAL

Sydney is expected to need another 725,000 dwellings by 2036 and both parties are promising in the lead-up to the March state election that they have a plan to deal with the resulting congestion and crowding.

Opposition Leader Michael Daley [in an interview in the Herald on Saturday](#) established two points of difference between his response to the issue and Premier Gladys Berejiklian which he hopes will appeal to voters.



Michael Daley says western Sydney faces "rampant" development. CREDIT: JAMES ALCOCK

First, Mr Daley accepts that Sydney is likely to keep growing and the task is to plan for the growth.

He earns points for telling it straight. This was actually the position that the Coalition government held for its first seven years in power.

It embraced Sydney's growth and pledged to build the infrastructure to allow Sydney to handle this influx. Former premier Mike Baird raised cash to start the job by selling off the state's electricity network.

Ms Berejiklian, however, changed tack six months ago and announced she opposed further migration. She has called on the federal government to cut total

migration and start programs to encourage more migrants to move to the regions.

Ms Berejiklian says she is still pro-migration in theory, but she wants a pause until the infrastructure program can catch up with population growth.

Voters should question this sharp change of rhetoric so close to an election. It is all very well complaining about migration but there is little Ms Berejiklian can do to stop it because it is an area of policy where all the key levers are in the hands of the federal government. And once people migrate to Australia there is very little that can be done to stop them moving to Sydney where the jobs are.

Mr Daley's second point of difference is his promise to correct what he believes is "rampant" bias in the housing plan developed by the Greater Sydney Commission, the body established by the Coalition to plan for the city's expected growth.

That plan set housing supply targets for each local government area for the next five years supposedly based on factors such as likely demand, employment and local infrastructure.

Mr Daley says that the commission went soft on local councils in blue-ribbon Liberal areas and allowed them to maintain their leafy green suburban character. On the other hand it inflicted "rampant development" on councils in traditional ALP areas in outer districts which will be turned into concrete jungles of apartment blocks. He compared Blacktown, which will have 13,950 new dwellings, with Hunters Hill, which will have just 150.

Slamming rich suburbs is good retail politics but Mr Daley should avoid simplistic comparisons. Blacktown is about 50 times bigger in area than Hunters Hill and it could well be a better place to accommodate new housing.

Mr Daley is however touching on a raw nerve. Ms Berejiklian has laid herself open to the criticism that the targets were distorted by politics by an exemption granted to Finance Minister Victor Dominello, who is fighting to retain his seat of Ryde. Even though Ryde Council was supposed to accommodate 7600 new dwellings, it was granted a two-year exemption from rezoning of residential land for higher density.

Certainly, it might make sense to revise the Greater Sydney Commission's plan, which was always intended to be a living document. But the challenge for both parties is to set out rational, apolitical criteria for their planning decisions linked to the delivery of the right infrastructure. That is the only way to build confidence in the process.

https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/daley-right-to-focus-on-planning-for-sydney-s-growth-20190114-p50r9i.html?ref=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=rss_feed