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Population strategy must deliver balance, investment and housing supply

The Victorian division of the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA Victoria) has welcomed the long-term vision for managing Victoria's population growth outlined by the Liberal National Coalition but cautioned that the strategy should redirect its focus from slowing growth to speeding up infrastructure and services delivery.

"The issue is not that growth is happening too fast; the issue is that infrastructure delivery is happening too slowly. The focus needs to shift from curbing population growth to delivering infrastructure more efficiently," said UDIA Victoria's chief executive Danni Addison.

Should a Liberal National Government be elected, a new Population Commission would recommend development restrictions for suburbs where infrastructure and services aren't keeping up with growth.

"There is merit to the model of a Population Commission but rather than looking at how to restrict growth, the attention must be on establishing accurate data forecasting measures and policy conditions that will support the industries delivering the homes and infrastructure we need, at the pace we need," said Ms Addison.

"Growing pains aren't the result of a population that's too big; it's the result of poor planning, policy that doesn't allow our industries to properly cater for growth, and the fact that some municipalities simply refuse to pull their weight when it comes to accommodating new residents."

We are playing catch-up to deliver the homes, services, infrastructure and amenities we need, and our communities are feeling the strain in their everyday lives. But population growth creates hundreds of thousands of Victorian jobs and underpins our economy. Additionally, restricting development when we need more housing than ever before would drive up house prices.

"Putting a cap on population growth, even at a local level, will open up a whole new can of worms for Victorians to struggle with – it's not the right answer," said Ms Addison.

Under a Guy government, population restrictions would be accompanied by incentives to get more people to settle in regional Victoria, rather than in Melbourne.

"Encouraging growth in regional Victoria is one thing, but we should never force people to relocate. All our residents deserve a choice in how and where they live so incentivising people and businesses to move into our regional areas will be very important to properly realising a decentralisation approach," she said.

"We urge all political parties to focus on balanced planning policies that enable, rather than discourage, all parts of Melbourne and Victoria to accommodate our population.

"At the end of the day, our political leaders must make responsible, educated decisions that will help more people live in well-serviced areas; not lock up these areas for only the privileged to enjoy."

-ENDS-

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ABOUT: URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) is a nationally recognised body that advocates for Australia's urban development industry. In Victoria, UDIA informs and engages government and industry members, **enabling better policy and better business decisions**. With a primary focus on the residential property sector, UDIA protects and promotes over 320 member companies across Victoria including developers and a range of other professionals involved in producing, financing and marketing residential property.

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