

Planning Councils vary on home approvals

Not all suburbs are developed equally

James Robertson

Sydney is becoming a lopsided city as some suburbs approve thousands more new developments than planned and others only a fraction of their share, a new analysis shows.

Recent targets having been surpassed, the state government's latest plan aims for 700,000 new homes in Sydney over 20 years to keep up with population growth.

Councils have their own share. But a new analysis comparing how many new dwellings each council has approved against its targets over the past decades suggests development in Sydney is very uneven.

Ryde Council, for example, has approved 150 per cent of the new apartments and homes (dwellings) asked for in its target, or some 3800 more. Right next door, however, the smaller, richer enclave of Hunters Hill, hits little more than 75 per cent of its target despite its being the second-lowest in the city and asking only for about 40 new dwellings a year.

The Greens, who used ABS and planning department data to run the analysis, say it is proof the state government is saddling some suburbs with overdevelopment and must move towards a more equitable system of planning.

"Many Sydney communities are bearing an unnecessary load," said Jamie Parker, the Balmain MP who commissioned the analysis. "Overdevelopment and excessive building is blighting so many Sydney suburbs. This destruction is absolutely unnecessary, considering that many local areas have already met their agreed targets".

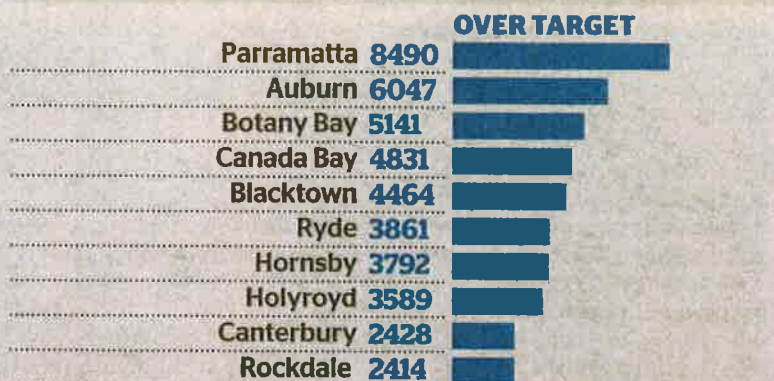
The Blue Mountains has hit one-third of its target, with a deficit of 3300 homes over the past decade.

But in Sydney's inner-south, Botany Council has approved 2.5 times its targets, or 5000 homes above expectations.

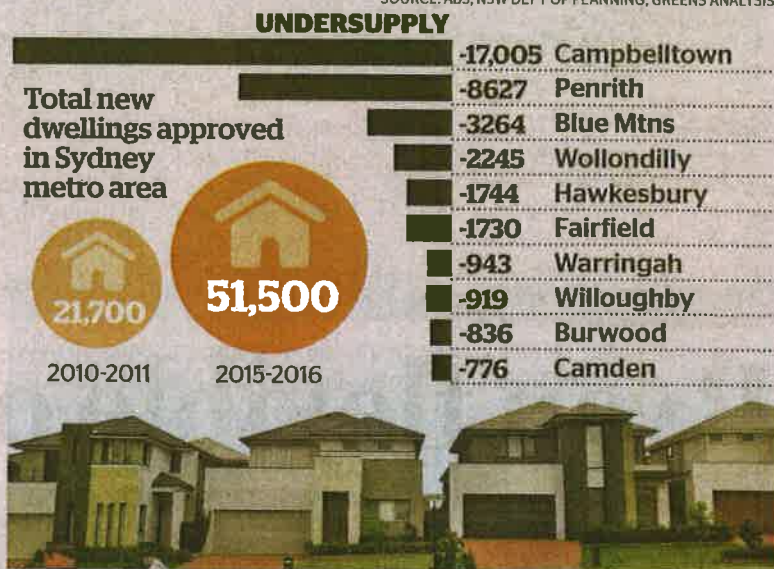
Other surpluses include Bankstown (2400), Canada Bay (4800), Hornsby (3700), Auburn (6000) and Parramatta (8500).

Off target

Best and worst performers - new dwellings by LGA



SOURCE: ABS, NSW DEPT OF PLANNING, GREENS ANALYSIS



"The centre west of Sydney seems to be a soft area in terms of development objections," said Professor Bill Randolph from the UNSW Cities Future Research Centre. "Of course many of the tougher areas correspond with Liberal Party electorates."

Several other suburbs in Sydney's north including Warringah, Pittwater, Willoughby and Manly have also fallen short of their targets. Mosman, however, has doubled its (lowest of all councils) target and Lane Cove also runs a surplus of 1000 homes.

Chris Johnson of the Urban Taskforce, a group representing property developers, argues the

targets represent a failure of government planners to anticipate Sydney's changing preferences.

"More than two-thirds of approvals [for new homes] are for apartments now," he said. "That means people go to areas where apartments work, namely areas closer to public transport and jobs. All the developers are doing is responding to where people want to live."

The largest shortfalls are in Sydney's south-west, where plans for a major expansion in population are yet to materialise and continue to hinge on a second airport.

The Greater Sydney Commission said it plans to review its local targets.