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AFRAN Workshop on Sufficiency & Adaptive Reuse 14 May 2025

MAKING RETENTION, RETROFIT & REUSE THE NORM: WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Policy Leadership

- A. Adaptive Reuse (AR) should be the *first option* considered before redevelopment and should extend beyond housing to include commercial or community functions. Opportunity for early cost-benefits studies.
- B. Government including referral agencies (e.g. EPA) should lead by prioritising Sufficiency and AR in planning policies and EOIs, and reconsider preference for new in Government accommodation.
- C. Planning and Building Codes should better accommodate AR scenarios e.g. precinct parking could solve difficulty of providing within building footprint.

Carbon Budgets & Accounting

- D. Government should lead by demonstrating a serious commitment to reduce embodied carbon and address Scope 3.
- E. It should account for and manage carbon budget. Current policy does not adequately value embodied carbon saved by AR; need better balance in regulations between embodied carbon savings (AR) and operational energy efficiency (new builds).
- F. Carbon reporting (Scope 3) and transparency can be a key driver for AR and make business sense. Business case should be demonstrated during project feasibility using economic modelling that reflects whole life costing. Count the carbon of what is demolished and add that deficit if you are looking at new build. Cost of carbon can also add value to heritage retention, while naming rights building could also come with carbon credentials.

Database of Vacant Precincts, Buildings & Land

- G. Establish publicly accessible database of vacant precincts, buildings and land, with local, tailored frameworks to identify opportunities for AR, drive solutions and redirect investment. This should capture age of city buildings, to better understand nature of the building stock and create a potential pipeline for AR.

- H. Encourage virtual and physical data about condition and suitability of existing materials and structures (e.g. Green Industries SA Knowledge Hub), with computer modelling/BIM/Point Cloud, digital twins, and markets/platforms for exchange.

Economic Incentives & Fee/Tax Relief

- I. Mandating AR without support mechanisms risks negative economic and planning outcomes, especially as some developers already evaluate AR.
- J. Economic incentives (e.g. tax relief, reduced fees and charges) are therefore critical to make AR viable - to be connected back to increased development costs to save carbon. Note: Further investigate GST relief for AR.
- K. Government subsidy to be considered for early investigative works, feasibility and heritage studies, and for design fees that are critical to reduce risks and unknowns e.g. upgrades to seismic and services can be major barrier. Database (above) can also assist investigations and reduce risk.

Design

- L. Incentivise developers to design that pivot opportunity and market changes into any new build e.g. student accommodation becoming general housing. Develop guidelines for flexibility in new builds.
- M. Design new buildings for change, with applicants to demonstrate how much can be reused in future. Building shape and features such as load-bearing facades may limit suitability for reuse. Structural engineers to allow for different scenarios.
- N. Encourage retention of existing structure/cold shell to save time, cost, and carbon, with alternative model for moveable & reusable fit out by tenant.

Education & Knowledge Sharing

- O. Owners, State and Federal Governments, Councils, and industry need education to *shift mindset* towards AR. A 'can do' mindset can achieve extraordinary outcomes.
- P. More education and knowledge is required about sufficiency and circular economy (CE) opportunities and practices. Sufficiency can avoid/reduce demand and consumption in the first place, thus improving effectiveness of CE.
- Q. Get quantity surveyors on board to understand innovation positively rather than expensive risk.

- R. Marketing, education and knowledge sharing to familiarise industry and potential purchasers/renters on value and feasibility of AR projects. Showcase exemplars that people can see in their own city, establish more awards for AR projects, and share knowledge from recently completed examples.**

Compliance & Standards

- S. Eliminate or adjust certain minimum standards (e.g. balcony, parking, windows) to facilitate adaptive reuse while still ensuring occupant amenity e.g. difficult to find perfect reused window to conform with energy assessment.**
- T. For low risk, non-urgent matters, compliance could be achieved progressively, with transition mechanisms involving carrots and sticks, accompanied by a prioritised and registered upgrade plan.**
- U. Relax certain regulations to enable emergency housing, with ‘light touch fit out’ to become mainstream for buildings empty over 2 years.**

Research & Guidelines

- V. Prioritise research on cost-effective solutions for AR projects, including analysis of seismic upgrade implications. Develop research and guidelines/pattern books to regularise and inspire creative solutions.**
- W. Research on implications of Sufficiency and AR for industry and employment.**
- X. Learn from French/EU policy around Sufficiency and AR via collaboration with World Sufficiency Lab, Paris.**