

VIEW FROM CANBERRA

September 2017

Australian Government's Inquiry into Cities and Regions

The BIC has recently made a submission into the future of our cities and regions and the Federal Government's role that focusses on the importance of how we move people in the future to ensure our cities and regions continue to be productive and livable.

How we move people sets the shape of our cities and settlement patterns and at the same time determines the connections to regions, towns and villages. I hope you can take the time to read the full submission, prepared by Professor John Stanley and myself that is available at www.ozebus.com.au/pdf/PDF_062.pdf but here is an overview.

Australia's cities are the envy of many internationally for their livability. However, we could be doing better in terms of long term goal achievement related to population growth and land use transport system performance.

Sitting behind this is a lack of sustained commitment to particular long term land use transport policy directions at both State and Federal levels, partly because of a lack of bipartisan political support.

Cities are becoming more complex and this poses challenges for policy and planning. Links between land use, transport, economic productivity, housing markets and social exclusion illustrate this complexity. Integrated governance is central to tackling such cross-cutting issues. There is an urgent need to take more integrated approaches to city strategic land use transport policy and planning and to better integrate governance arrangements between each level of Government.

The BIC submission in addressing "Sustainability transitions in existing cities" (sub inquiry 1) and "Growing new and transitioning regional cities and towns, (sub inquiry 2) looked at:

- governance, with a particular focus on integrated governance in land use transport policy and planning and how it might be improved in Australian cities, to enable them to deliver better economic, social and environmental outcomes and
- regional connectivity and accessibility with a particular focus on agglomeration economies from mobility improvements in Australian regions to better connect communities between regions and to both national and international economy and building bridging social capital to reduce the risk of social exclusion.

Here are our Recommendations to the Federal Government:

Recommendations for Sub Inquiry 1

- Pilots or case studies be undertaken to understand how a "Total Transport" approach can be implemented in Australia to engage local communities in local land use transport and policy planning to identify best practice.
- Establish Metropolitan Planning Authorities for cities that increases local government involvement in strategic land use planning processes and elects a "mayor" to speak on behalf of the city.
- The Federal Government to channel transport funding through Metropolitan Planning Authorities and have board level involvement in the Metropolitan Planning Authorities.
- Strategic land use transport policy and planning to require all cities to have long term (25-40 years) land use plans, leading a long term strategic transport plan together with rolling shorter term (~10 years) transport Implementation plans which includes funding plans
- Federal Government infrastructure funding and project identification be contingent on Recommendation 4.

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- A Federal Ministry for Cities is a permanently agreed portfolio recognising the national significance and importance of cities.
- The Federal Government develop a solid cities research and information base, including performance indicators to spur better national performance outcomes for cities.
- City performance indicators be a factor in determining Federal funding.
- Intergovernmental funding reform be undertaken that includes better aligning city revenue capacities with expenditure responsibilities.
- Formal Agreements between levels of Government be established to effect changed governance and government arrangements based on agreed principles to deliver “trusting partnerships” to deliver better cities
- Land use development direction to pursue more compact settlement patterns supported by strategic transport directions that takes into account local nuance.

Recommendations Sub Inquiry 2

- A National Transitional Regional Cities and Towns Strategy for population of less than 85,000 be developed with a focus on population demographics and transport connectivity and accessibility
- Export expansion be a key focus of Recommendation 1 with intra and inter regional connectivity as a key contributory mechanism for regional development.
- Research be undertaken through case studies of key regional centres and surrounding towns and villages to better understand the productivity benefits of “networked centres” within a polycentric regional development setting.
- The Federal Government invest in programs and infrastructure that stimulates integration of near by places to strengthen regional urban systems.
- All levels of government invest in improved public transport infrastructure and services to generate wider economic labour market benefits in regional areas.
- Government decision making in relation to Regional Development take into account the benefits regional areas provide as an alternative to the external costs of cities (congestion, crime, air pollution etc).
- Establish a series of demonstration studies of Regional Accessibility Committees in each State and Territory that includes identifying the intra and inter regional public transport service standards required for different sized regional populations to deliver productivity and social inclusion benefits.

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