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# Towards a national cities agenda

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# Australia urgently needs a national cities policy

**This generation has the responsibility to put forward C21<sup>st</sup> visions and framework for future growth, sustainability and governance of Australia's cities.**

1. Capital cities (70% of GDP, 64% population)
  2. National productivity agenda – spatial dimension underdeveloped
  3. Distinctiveness of city economies – agglomeration, knowledge exchange
  4. Negative impacts of urbanisation and globalisation
  5. Knowledge based economies/clusters and innovation
  6. Backlogs in infrastructure expenditure from dark ages – bottlenecks
  7. Increasing disparities in wealth and income, marginalisation
  8. Cities dynamics should drive and interact with infrastructure priorities
  9. Institutional and Policy fragmentation and incoherence
  10. Concentration of GHG emissions in cities
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# Observations

- Positive announcement of cities agenda
  - Cities policy to complement macro settings and to move beyond the narrowness of micro economic reform.
  - Much more than land use planning
  - Integration between spatial planning and economic policy, sustainability, housing, infrastructure and learning agendas.
  - Consolidation of relationships between state, financial and developer interests increased distortions and inequalities.
  - GFC – from stimulus to transformation strategies
  - Climate change - 350 ppm won't go away as impacts intensify
  - Local level reform required to spur birth of participatory democracy
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# The lessons of metro strategies

- Align strategic planning & infrastructure
  - Careful analysis of economic dynamics
  - Broaden debate outside of well resourced interest groups
  - Increasing the stake in the future of the city
  - City planning not just top-down new release boundaries and local residential targets
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# How neo-liberalism transformed cities

- Financial globalisation
  - Resource flows to large commercial projects
  - Centralisation of activities in commercial towers
  - Increased influence of rentiers, financiers, speculators
  - Levering the family home for wealth creation (H/H debt)
  - Individual consumption vs. collective consumption
  - Commercialisation of arts and culture/public domain
  - Asset bubbles, cycles and disparities
  - User pays impedes alignment between jobs & housing
  - Industry restructuring – marginalised communities
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# Where to for the post neo-liberal city?

- Critique of the global city – The high costs of financial globalisation, global city hierarchy.
  - New agendas for globalisation – compact supply chains, knowledge & cultural exchange, education
  - More resources required for collective consumption – health, learning, skills
  - Future of PPPs (what about PCPs?)
  - Building assets and capabilities
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# A cities policy is about integration of policies

- Population
  - Economy
    - The future of global cities
    - Tax
    - Economics drivers and employment change
    - Innovation
    - Labour market change
  - Urban infrastructure
  - Getting people around
    - Congestion
    - Moving away from car dependence
  - Housing
    - Household stress
    - Increasing supply and diversity
  - Health, liveability and well-being
  - Sustainability
  - Governance
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# Population

- Intergenerational Report projects Australia's population will grow by 65 per cent to reach over 35 million people in 2049, up from around 21½ million people now.
  - 22% over the age of 65 by 2049, compared to current 13%.
  - Capital cities contain 75% population, but 90% of overseas born
  - Evolving conurbations and the poly-centric city
  - Ageing
  - Further compacting of cities – does the one hour city make sense
  - Consolidation vs multi-centred cities
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# Cities economies

- Better analysis of city economies and their dynamics
  - Post-GFC and post-Copenhagen world.
  - Jobs and Poly-centric cities
  - Support emerging sectors vs. enabling environment
  - Knowledge-based economy – an unfinished agenda
  - Supporting SMEs and cluster policy
  - Distortions for SMEs – high interest rates, access to credit, rents
  - Labour market and skills
  - Strengthening local learning communities eg Strategic Brokers
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# Tax system issues

- How can the fastest growing OECD country have one of the lowest tax rates?
  - Imbalances in our cities
  - Inflates housing prices to unsustainable levels
  - Restricts investment growth in rapidly growing under-serviced areas (eg levies)
  - Borrowing constraints on Councils forced to increase levies
  - Congestion pricing policy, environmental taxes
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# Sustainability and city/local economies

- From global framework (maybe) to city/local initiative.
  - Investigations of policy and mitigation costs (+ peak oil).
  - Impacts on resource exports and power supply mix
  - Emergence of compact supply chain agendas
  - Green jobs and green skills potential
  - Local sustainability budgets & innovation strategies
    - expand active local transport, establish building industry networks, green infrastructure and services to support households.
  - New environmental accounting frameworks
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# Governance

- Cities and the weakening of democracy
  - Zone it and with a bit of boosterism they will come
  - Our bottom up democratic institutions are not healthy
  - Interrelations between political parties, donations and urban growth and the narrowing of democratic spaces
  - Commitment to sub-national governance – subsidiarity
    - European charter of local self-government
  - New partnerships between three tiers of government
  - Devolution of resources and responsibility to local and regional administrative units – learning, housing, sustainability, active transport
  - Participatory democracy – the right to know, accountability, community democracy,
  - Redefining learning communities
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# Outcomes from national cities agenda

- National cities productivity & innovation agenda
  - Realistic house prices and greater diversity
  - World class infrastructure
  - Increased resources for innovative SMEs & clusters
  - Stronger inter-governmental partnerships based on subsidiarity principles
  - Sustainable economy transformation strategies
  - Expand spaces for community democracy
  - Improved efficiency, accountability and transparency in the planning system
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