

Benefits from a stronger local economy on the urban/rural interface



By now, almost everyone agrees on the need for sustainability and for quick and effective action to address climate change. The well publicised Stern Review of the economics of climate change gives a global perspective:

“Using the results from formal economic models, the Review estimates that if we don’t act, the overall costs and risks of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP each year, now and forever. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the estimates of damage could rise to 20% of GDP or more .”¹

On the Australian front, evidence suggests that the fringe areas of metropolitan cities are an important plank in any strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Writing on the related topic of peak oil, Newman contributes an interesting insight. His analysis of suburban data *“in Australia shows that: (1) fuel use per capita can be easily predicted simply by knowing the distance from the CBD (the relationship is $y=10x+3$, where y is the transport greenhouse gas in kg of CO₂ per person per day, and x is the kms from the CBD); this shows how important redevelopment is over fringe development in the post-peak oil city; (2) the activity intensity (people and jobs per ha) explains 56% of the variance in transport patterns in Melbourne and 71% in Sydney where densities are more extreme; and (3) access to quality public transport (no timetable required and weekend/night-time services) explains 61% of Melbourne’s variance and 58% of Sydney’s .”²*

Research undertaken by SGS into metropolitan Melbourne’s ‘Interface’ region³ provides a useful case study quantifying and calculating the triple bottom line benefits that would arise from strengthening the local economy at the urban-rural interface. The analysis indicates that environmental benefits would flow, as indicated by the Stern and Newman reports, but there

would also be social and economic benefits. Reducing the need to travel to work outside the interface region is a key factor.

Understanding key elements of the Interface

The Interfaces between urban and rural Australia are an important segment of the Australian economy. Melbourne’s Interface region accounts for 24% of the population of the MSD and 21% of Melbourne’s working population. The dominant household structure in Melbourne’s Interface is couple families with children, accounting for 55% of all its families. This is compared to the MSD average of 50%. The high percentage of families in the Interface can be attributed to the lifestyle opportunities that the region offers: notably, larger suburban lots with front and rear gardens and access to open space and recreation opportunities. These environments are continuing to be attractive to families, particularly in the geography of the affordability crisis, when outer suburban land is relatively cheaper than inner and middle areas of Melbourne.

Figure 1. The Interface Region of metropolitan Melbourne



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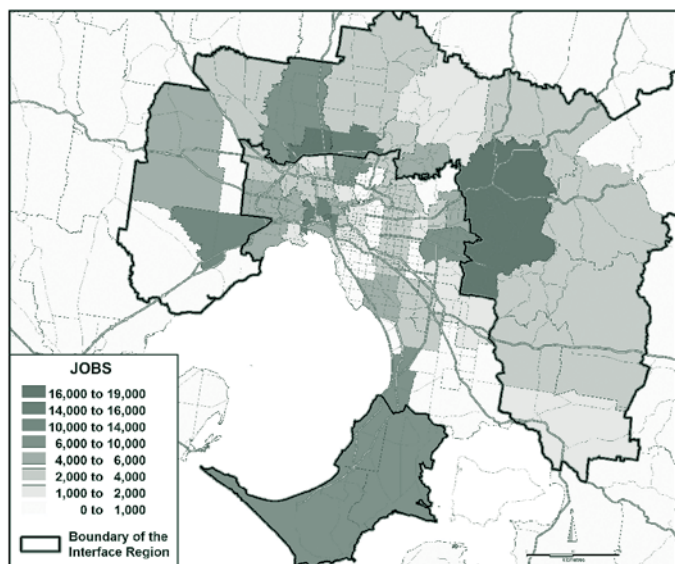
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The interface, with its strong family core, can be conceptualised as the labour force platform from which residents live and access jobs outside of their local areas. Its economy is unbalanced to the extent that there are many more workers living in the Interface (340,000), than people who work in the Interface (210,000).

The interface economy contains a substantial number of industries that are geared towards serving its large and family-oriented population base. These include retail trade, education and construction. Transport and storage is also a specialisation and a high contributor to the Interface region's Gross Regional Product (GRP). This relates to the large amount of land available there and its good accessibility to major freeways.

A substantial weakness of the Interface however is its lack of the high value added property and business services industry (contributing 8% to the GRP of the Interface while the relevant metropolitan Melbourne average is 15%). This highlights the need to integrate the region better with the knowledge/advanced business services economy, which tends to be concentrated in and around the CBD. Given the weakness of the property and business services industry in the Interface, it is not surprising that there is a strong outflow of workers from the Interface to the rest of the MSD in this industry. The net outflow of workers is 55% for property and business services and 76% for finance and insurance. This is in contrast to the Interface industry average of 37%.

Figure 2. Major work destinations of residents in the Interface and major transport networks



In major part, the sustainability dilemma of Melbourne's interface originates from its function as a labour platform. The dominant mode of transport for residents in their travel to work is the car. Car trips constitute approximately 73% of all journey to work trips.⁴ Public transport instead accounts for only 2% of trips. This profile is in contrast to the MSD where a much higher proportion of people utilise public transport across all occupation categories. The radial nature of the public transport system does not tend to suit the cross-town travel patterns of the population in the urban fringe, resulting in high private transport usage.

In their journey to work (as shown in Figure 2) many Interface residents travel to: the SLA of Yarra Ranges - South West which contains the activity centre of Lillydale and is on two major train lines; Hume - Broadmeadows which contains a transit city, is a growth corridor, and has strong links with Melbourne's manufacturing and transport and distribution sectors; the City of Melbourne, Victoria's gateway to the global economy and Melbourne's service centre; Wyndham - North; and Whittlesea - South.

Building a baseline

In order to evaluate the benefits that might flow from a stronger Interface economy, it is first of all necessary to build a base line assessment. Given that we know origin and destination of workers (ABS Journey to Work 2001), it is possible to estimate total distances travelled⁵ by residents per working day:

- For outside of the Interface to inside the Interface trips it is 3.5 million km;
- For inside the Interface to outside the interface trip it is 8.5 million km; and
- For within the Interface trips it is 2.5 million km.

Hence for each working day, the Interface economy results in journey to work trips of 14.5 million km.

Given data on total distances travelled, the type of transport mode used, and published ratios from the Victorian Department of Infrastructure and the Australian Transport Council, it is then possible to estimate four types of costs associated with journeying to work in/ to the Interface. In a simple model, the economic value of travel time, vehicle operating cost, environmental air pollution, and noise pollution can then be calculated. The baseline assessment is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Baseline socio-environmental assessment

	Interface Councils As Origin	Interface Councils As Destination	Within Interface Councils	Total
Economic Value of Travel Time	-\$1,360,942	-\$552,183	-\$465,237	-\$2,378,362
Vehicle Operating Cost	-\$1,620,194	-\$715,989	-\$461,619	-\$2,797,802
Environmental Air Pollution	-\$15,584,777	-\$6,860,496	-\$4,423,706	-\$26,868,979
Noise Pollution	-\$2,041,504	-\$899,951	-\$580,059	-\$3,521,515
Total	-\$20,607,416	-\$9,028,620	-\$5,930,622	-\$35,566,658

Source: SGS Economics and Planning Calculations

Out of the four costs analysed, by far the greatest and a key variable in the climate change debate, is that related to environmental air pollution (CO₂, N₂O, CN₄). By splitting the analysis by the type of trips that were undertaken, the table above shows that the main contributor to these costs is Interface as origin trips. Substantial environmental costs arise from the function of the Interface as a labour platform from which residents access jobs in the MSD.

Summing these social, economic and environmental costs results in a baseline cost of \$35.57m per working day. Through regional input-output analysis, it can also be calculated separately that the existing GRP of the region is \$11b.

Benefits of a stronger local economy in the Interface

There are substantial social, environmental and economic costs associated with urban sprawl. We would expect therefore that benefits would flow from concentrating new development activity (e.g. residential and employment) in areas serviced by a high level of infrastructure and consequently reducing travel distances. These would include:

- Environmental benefits- the potential to reduce transport-related greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution from a car dependent economy and decreases in travel distances;
- Social benefits- more time being freed and able to be spent with the family and for leisure purposes;
- Economic benefits - time freed by shorter travelling distances which is then able to be used for economically productive purposes.

Furthermore, by increasing economic activities that are complementary to the existing local base, it is also possible to minimise escape expenditure and increase economic growth by minimising the sourcing of external goods and services. A "tighter" economic system is created that better recycles valuable export income.

Given the current baseline estimates above, it is possible to estimate the benefits associated with increasing the level of self-containment in the Interface region. The analysis models a 2% and 5% increase in job self containment and the associated savings generated - decreased greenhouse gas emissions, noise pollution and vehicle operating costs; the value of time freed, plus the economic multiplier effects from some of the 'extra' time being used in economically productive activities. This is then compared to the base case scenario.

The results are shown in Table 2. For a 2% and 5% increase in self-containment there is a benefit to the Victorian economy of \$23.09m and \$57.73m per year respectively.

Table 2. Benefits of increased self containment in the Interface region, for the Victorian economy

	Scenario 1 - 2% Increase in Self Containment	Scenario 2 - 5% Increase in Self Containment
Economic Value of Travel Time (Initial Stimulus)	\$4,640	\$11,601
Vehicle Operating Cost	\$7,796	\$19,491
Environmental Air Pollution	\$75,132	\$187,830
Noise Pollution	\$9,839	\$24,599
Sub Total (Per Working Day)	\$97,408	\$243,520
Sub Total (Per Year)	\$22,403,819	\$56,009,547
Add Economic Value of Travel Time (Multiplier)	\$689,604	\$1,724,158
Total (Per Year)	\$23,093,423	\$57,733,705

Source: SGS Economics and Planning Calculations

Valuing these considerable social, economic and environmental benefits is relatively straightforward, but the practical means of achieving them will require nuance and political will. Key elements in achieving success will include:

- The provision of enabling infrastructure in outer suburbs to improve linkages to existing activity centres and employment areas;
- Improvement of cross-city public transport networks to more adequately reflect the journey to work patterns of interface communities;

- Provision of suitable local business environments for employment attraction;
- Promotion of higher density living around outer suburban activity centres to reduce travel demands; and
- Enhancement of workforce skills and infrastructure of 'new economy' industries and the curtailment of the current outflow of knowledge workers. ■

Footnotes

¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/9/CLOSED_SHORT_executive_summary.pdf

² <http://www.vcross.org.au/documents/VCOSS%20docs/Transport/peakOil/NewmanPeakOil.doc>

³ This has been defined to include Wyndham City Council, Melton Shire Council, Hume City Council, Whittlesea City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Cardinia Shire Council, and Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. Reported here are regional averages but the interface is heterogeneous and each local government area is unique. Discrepancies between the regional average and each local government area can be substantial.

⁴ The numerator includes those who journey in a car as a driver or as a passenger, but not those who utilise multi-modal transport that includes a car. The denominator includes those who worked at home and did not go to work.

⁵ As the crow flies

Investing in regional infrastructure - building competitiveness or elaborate pork barrelling?



As part of their wider regional development policies, most States provide targeted subsidies for infrastructure provision in non-metropolitan areas. Are these warranted? How can we tell whether they are having the desired economic impact?

The principles which drive government investment in infrastructure generally frame the broad policy rationale for regional subsidies directed at roads, water infrastructure, power upgrades and town business centre revitalisation. Infrastructure is generally understood to be prone to 'market failure'; that is, left to its own devices, the market is unlikely to generate an optimal level of investment in this particular asset class. This is a function of 3 factors: the 'non-excludability' characteristics of infrastructure benefits; the presence of externalities; and the potential for natural monopoly.

Infrastructure benefits are 'non-excludable' in character. For many infrastructure items it is not possible, practical or desirable to confine usage to particular users who can be charged a price which will generate revenues to meet operating costs and service the capital deployed. An example of such infrastructure projects is the revitalisation of the public domain (footpaths, planting, seating, toilet facilities, city parks etc) in country towns. Non excludability means that the market is unlikely to spontaneously generate such investment in the public domain, notwithstanding the demonstrable social and economic benefits to users.

Infrastructure projects support a wide range of social, cultural and economic interactions. Accordingly, they tend to generate substantial externalities, or third party effects, including significant non-user beneficiaries. For example, improved rail or road linkages between outlying settlements and a regional centre can significantly improve health outcomes by lifting accessibility to remedial and preventative care. The benefits of improved health outcomes will be widely shared across the community, including local businesses which will enjoy superior productivity. The value of external benefits cannot be taken into account by private investors, as they have no way of charging for these benefits. Consequently, the market will undervalue the total benefits generated by infrastructure and, other things equal, will underinvest in infrastructure as a result.

The potential for natural monopoly arises because some user markets are too small to support more than one efficient supplier. The single supplier in command of such markets will be prone to the usual inefficiencies attached to monopoly power including under-provision and over-charging. Natural monopoly can sometimes apply to regional tourism facilities like caravan parks, on-shore boating facilities and bus services.

Failure to address such market failures and invest adequately in regional infrastructure can retard local regional and State-level economic performance. A large and growing body of literature indicates that the relationship between economic growth and infrastructure is not only correlated, but that infrastructure investment actually kicks off additional rounds of productivity enhancement. Recent Australian modelling¹ demonstrates this high pay off from infrastructure investment, even when compared to competing industrial investments. This reiterates the themes evident in ongoing US research, which suggest that a dollar investment in public infrastructure, leads to overall economic output increase of between \$1.70 and \$3.90 (refer Table 1).

This theory suggests that the provision of infrastructure subsidies in regional areas can boost productivity and competitiveness in a variety of ways:

Firstly, it enables investment and productive activity that otherwise would not occur. For example, enhanced reliability of industrial electricity supply to dairy farming regions can induce substantial private investment in more efficient milking, packaging and transportation

equipment, and spark the formation of new businesses to deliver these services.

Table 1 Production function estimates of output elasticity of public capital

Author	Level of Data Aggregation	Specification	Output Elasticity of Capital Stock
Ashauer (1989)	National (USA)	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.39
Holtz-Eakin (1994)	National (USA)	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.39
Munnel (1990a)	States (USA)	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.34
Costa <i>et al.</i> (1987)	States (USA)	Translog: levels	0.20
Eisner (1991)	States (USA)	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.17
Mera (1973)	Japanese Regions	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.20
Munnel (1990b)	States (USA)	Cobb-Douglas: log levels	0.15
Deno <i>et al.</i> (1989)	Metropolitan Areas (USA)	Log levels	0.08
Eberts (1986, 1990)	Metropolitan Areas (USA)	Translog: Levels	0.03

Source: Mamatzakis (2002)²

Secondly, it can generate activity which will stabilise a critical mass of population and businesses in an area, thereby enabling continuing use of sunk infrastructure resources, including existing roads, schools, shops, hospitals and police stations. This, more efficient use of existing infrastructure saves the cost of new investment in similar facilities elsewhere, thereby freeing up resources for re-investment in the traded sector of the economy.

Finally, it can improve social cohesion and build stronger communities, with demonstrable impacts on labour productivity and reduced social expenditures, such as in health care, policing and family support.

But how do we measure whether these benefits are actually delivered by these programs? Several conceptual and methodological issues need to be resolved in estimating the economic impacts of regional infrastructure subsidies. These include the problems of base case definition, transfer effects, redirection of capital investment and comparative yield.

Base case definition

A crucial step is to postulate a 'Base Case Scenario' against which the effect of the regional subsidies will be gauged. The Base Case may be summed up as 'what would have happened in the region(s) and the State as whole, had the subsidies not been in operation?'

In some instances, the subsidies will have had the effect of enabling investment in a region that would not have otherwise occurred. In other cases, the program may have simply brought forward private sector investment that would have occurred anyway. Both these impacts will have positively affected the economies in question but the scale of benefit in question may vary significantly, depending on the extent of any bring forward effect.

Transfer effects

In a similar vein, the analysis must be open to the possibility that the subsidies may have redistributed existing market activity from one region to another as opposed to growing the market as a whole. Data gathering processes must probe on this point and

subsequent modelling needs to feature adequate sensitivity testing to assess the implications of transfer effects.

Redirection of capital investment

The analysis of the subsidies against the Base Case Scenario must also contemplate the possibility that the program will have redirected capital investment from one locality (including the metropolitan area) to the target region. This raises questions regarding the relative leveraging effect across the potential destinations for the investment, and the extent to which the redirection of capital may have prevented 'leakage' of investment from the State in question.

Comparative yield

More generally, the analysis must consider the implications of redirecting income from consumption to investment via Government 'saving'. Depending on wider macro-economic conditions, diminished consumption spending will mean reduced activity (and jobs/output). But the investment in infrastructure may well facilitate greater economic activity in out-years, negating any adverse effect in the short term. This issue points to the need for a longitudinal macro-economic assessment of the subsidies, as opposed to a one off or 'cross-sectional' approach using static input output models. ■

Footnotes

¹ Committee for Economic Development of Australia (2005) *Infrastructure – Getting on with the Job*, Melbourne.

² Mamatzakis, E.C. (2002), "Public Infrastructure and Private Output: An Application to Greece," *Journal of Economic Development*, Volume 27, Number 2, December, 143-160.

Regional economic development and the role of Local Government



Over the last fifteen years or more, local governments throughout Australia have become increasingly active in promoting and facilitating economic development in their local areas of jurisdiction. At the same time, various State and Commonwealth government agencies (some of which have come and gone) have been

established to deal with issues concerning 'regional' economic development, particularly in Australia's non-metropolitan areas.

However, the general absence of institutionalised levels of regional government in Australia makes it incumbent upon Local Government to adopt a broader view on economic development matters. And in places like Queensland for example, where a number of new 'regional' councils are soon to be established as part of the planned local government amalgamations in early 2008, 'thinking globally and acting regionally' must come to the forefront of the minds of local politicians and decision-makers.

So how does 'regional' economic development differ from 'local' economic development? Perhaps more importantly, what is considered a relevant geographic area for Local Government to engage in activities that promote and facilitate economic development?

Local Government is only constrained in relation to pursuing economic development by the scale at which it can operate. It has a limited jurisdiction and a range of responsibilities and resources. A relevant *area* therefore, for the purposes of Local Government and economic development, is *the area over which the responsible Council can have an influence*.

This will certainly include areas up to and including the scale of the whole municipality, where Council operates initiatives and activities that can clearly be labelled 'local' economic development. For example, a local town, suburb, industrial area or retail centre in decline for which the local Council can facilitate infrastructure programs or promotional campaigns to encourage the improved performance of those areas. Alternatively, it may involve land use planning, infrastructure provision or the provision of business support and assistance programs across the whole Local Government Area. However, for comprehensive economic development promotion and facilitation, it is necessary to draw the links between areas of community and economic focus such that relevant communities of interest are identified and supported. Relevant concerns at this level may go beyond Local Government boundaries to encompass a 'region' of interest.

Some Local Government Authorities may command a jurisdiction of a regional scale in which case it would be relevant for them to develop 'regional' strategies. Local Councils which individually do not cover such a 'regional' economic area should seek to expand their spatial level of relevance by joining with neighbouring Councils to develop mutually beneficial policies and strategies. Even Councils that individually encompass areas of regional magnitude will benefit from a higher level of cooperation and coordination of resources and activities with groups of smaller neighbouring councils which have grouped together to form natural economic regions. This is not only for reasons of efficiency through resource sharing but also because economies of scale dictate that local Councils should cooperate and coordinate their economic development efforts so that their communities can adjust, survive, compete and prosper.

Regional competition is not the solution

While Local Government efforts to facilitate investment, create wealth and generate jobs must often take on a regional dimension, this does not imply that regions should necessarily set out to compete with one another to enhance their prosperity (although in certain respects this will, and should, occur). It is unlikely that an LGA will be large enough on its own to encompass all of the pre-conditions for a competitive economic environment. Neither will it be likely that any one regional community will have the scale and capacity to host all of the pre-conditions they need to support internationally competitive regional economies. This is particularly so in nations with a low population, like Australia.

A concerted approach to economic development, if properly planned for and managed, will ensure that key issues and constraints on prosperity are more effectively dealt with and that the potential for complementary opportunities and activities is developed to the benefit of all who make up the region of interest. Central to this 'regional' approach is local government as a key stakeholder and natural leader of economic development facilitation.

Local Government is a leader of economic development

While the other tiers of government may spend more money on economic development facilitation and promotion, Local Government is important because of its ubiquitous engagement with local (and regional) economic development.

Local Government also has an implicit charter to serve local communities. This includes nurturing a spirit that will help the community to adjust to economic dislocations, adjustments and disturbances as well as one that promotes opportunities for economic development. Local Government is a key player in the local economy in a number of ways:

- it spends money on development infrastructure that facilitates business and community activity and sustains environmental quality (e.g. roads, drains, parks, and gardens);
- it provides important community services that support economic activity and promote the health and well-being of the local population. These assist in social cohesion and the development of local identity (e.g. child care, recreation services, aged care);
- it is an effective partner in the early stages of project development through its role in development approvals (e.g. planning, building and health); and
- it is often the point of contact for local businesses and the community in relation to day-to-day concerns that affect the immediate environment for business production and quality of life (e.g. local land use conflicts and their resolution, lobbying their spheres of government for attention to problems outside the Council's responsibility, providing information

on changes to regulations, housing controls, etc.). In undertaking these activities, which are part of their fundamental obligations, local Councils should recognise that they are directly influencing the way in which the local economy develops. Consequently, Local Government must play a leadership role, and aim for best practice in each of its areas of responsibility.

It is difficult to be prescriptive about what role Local Government should have – given the variety and scope of issues and opportunities in different regions and locales. Nevertheless, it is important that some common ground be established so that Councils (and other government and non-government stakeholders) share a common view of what that role is. Activities where local Councils could effectively expand their functions in the economic development field include:

- Working with other stakeholders (including neighbouring Councils) to establish regional planning frameworks. This does not suggest an upheaval of existing Local, State and Commonwealth sponsored organisational frameworks for facilitating regional development. But Councils should work with other agencies within existing organisational frameworks to establish agreed principles and objectives to facilitate the economic development of their regions to the mutual benefit of constituent communities.
- Engaging the private sector in regional planning frameworks. All too often, private enterprise, which is the principal driver of economic growth, is not embraced a key partner in the determination of regional priorities. Mechanisms to increase the private sector's 'buy-in' to the regional economic development effort must be further explored.
- Understanding the key clusters that drive the regional economy. Building on the previous point, clusters must be industry led if they are to prosper. Local Government can provide the forums through which the clusters might grow. It can support cluster growth through its role as an infrastructure provider and in its role as an economic lobbyist for its region.
- Investing in local skills and knowledge (particularly within Local Government) of the meaning and importance of economic development.

These activities will only be widely embraced by Local Government once the Councils themselves are mandated to undertake such initiatives. This requires some serious thought on the part of the other two tiers of government as to how the role of Local Government as a facilitator of regional development might be advanced. And instead of developing policy and then seeking local partnerships, the Commonwealth and States should collaborate with Local Government in policy development from the outset. ■

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Planning policy for large format retailing



Competitive cities need suburban activity centres with strong place character, supported by mixed use development. Public investment and market-led development should be harnessed to support this end, but prescriptive planning measures are also needed.

Retailing is a key component of strong sub-regional and local town centres. In centres, retailing most commonly takes the form of either traditional shopping centres (strips or nodes) or planned shopping centres (shopping malls and supermarkets). Whilst these retailing forms still remain dominant, in recent years, large format, stand-alone category based form of retailing, often referred to as 'large format' retailing has gained a significant share of the market. This form of retailing has significant implications for land-use and transport planning in and around centres.

There are a number of different types of large format retailing, the most common being 'bulky goods' retailing which consist of warehouse type centres that sell large household goods such as furniture, floor covering and white goods. In addition, large format retailing provides for small goods retailing in associated lines or categories of goods of bulky goods. For example, the types of retail

goods available from large format outlets are both bulky (furniture, fridges) and small such as screws and nails and small electrical appliances like kettles and toasters. Discount retailers are also seeking large sites to provide standalone one stop locations for variety goods. Direct Factory Outlets for fashion, sports goods, books and records and small electrical goods are becoming more prominent.

Large format retailing generally seeks low cost buildings in low rent areas away from main centres in high motor vehicle accessible locations, generally on major arterials that allow high visibility for traffic. The justification advanced for non-centre location is that the floorspace requirements are extensive, the margins are low and thus low rent premises are required. In addition, non-centre locations are often justified on the grounds that consumers need private vehicles to transport 'bulky goods'. However, not all large format retailing involves bulky goods retailing.

Under a compact growth model of metropolitan strategy, 'out of centre' development should be discouraged. However, planning policies need to acknowledge that trends in large format retailing are likely to continue and that a truly strategic approach to retail planning needs to make provision for these activities. This means that while large format retailing cannot be located in the primary retail activity areas of a centre (due to land requirements and increased capacity for land-use conflicts), they can in most cases be located in 'specialist retail centres' adjacent to the primary retail centre, and where possible take advantage of public transport opportunities.

Large format retail stores in out-of-centre locations may be considered acceptable only when a net community benefit can be clearly established (over and above a centre or near centre location). Out-of-centre locations must be able to prove the same or superior performances in the following regards:

- Suitable accessibility to employment;
- Optimisation of infrastructure utilisation;
- Maintenance of foot traffic and street life in key town centres: and
- Management of travel demand by utilising public transport, walking and cycling.

In addition they must establish that there will be no detrimental effect on public and private investment in, or on the economic performance of existing centres in the city.

In summary, planning policies and controls should only permit out of centre retail development if it can be shown there will be no permanent damage to the quality of 'street life' or potential 'street life' in designated activity centres. Outside of this test, innovation within the retail sector should be welcome, provided it delivers a net community benefit, including assessment of transport and traffic impacts. ■

PIA commends Indigenous Gallery feasibility study

SGS, with 3-D Projects and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, was awarded a commendation for Social and Community Planning at the Planning Institute of Australia (Victoria) 2007 Awards for Planning Excellence. The feasibility study and business plan was prepared for Dhungala - The Murray River Gallery and Café to be located in Echuca, Victoria. The report allowed government and investors to evaluate the project for funding, and is being used to prepare for enterprise start up. SGS Economics and Planning and 3-D Projects worked closely with Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and an Indigenous social entrepreneur/artist to solidify a vision of developing "linkages with the private sector to provide opportunities for employment and financial gain for local community members" in Echuca/Moama.

Cooperating in Urban Management for Jiangsu - SGS in the AUS Cluster

SGS is a member of AUS (the Australian Urban Systems) Cluster, a group of planning, engineering and architectural consultants funded by the Victorian State Government to promote exports of urban management expertise, particularly to Victoria's sister state in China, Jiangsu Province. A plan for QiLin, a major new town linked to Nanjing, was prepared by cluster members Lab Architecture Studio (architects of Melbourne's Federation Square) and SGS in 2006. It was very well received, paving the way for more such projects in the Jiangsu Province. In September 2007, the Victorian Government hosted a signing ceremony for a co-operation protocol between the Nanjing Urban Planning Bureau and the AUS cluster. More recently, AUS entered a memorandum of understanding on cooperation with the city of Changzhou Wujin.

SGS leading team of experts on Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan

Sustainable Sydney 2030 is the vision and strategic plan for the City of Sydney over the next 20+ years. SGS is leading a team of planning, transport, social, cultural and economic experts to work collaboratively with the City of Sydney to prepare a longer term vision to fulfil the promise and opportunities increasingly expected of the City. Besides SGS, the consultant consortium includes Simpson Wilson Architects, Hill Thalys, Australia Street Company, Kinesis, and other independent specialists. The group's skills cover urban design, planning, finance, engineering, property, the arts, social planning and environmental science.

More information about these projects can be found on the SGS website 'what's new' page.

SGS launches new Brisbane office premises



Kate Morioka, practice Manager of SGS Brisbane office, recently welcomed clients and colleagues to the official launch of the relocated Brisbane office in Fortitude Valley. Besides the opportunity for networking, invitees and SGS staff heard presentations from Brisbane directors Sasha Lennon and Vanessa Harvey (pictured above). They highlighted the ten year history of the Brisbane practice and the focus of recent projects, including economic development, industrial planning, social and development infrastructure planning, housing, and economic and social impact assessments.

SGS welcomes new staff members

Imogen Halstead has joined the Sydney team, as a senior consultant. An economist, she has particular expertise in economic analysis, knowledge of the development sector and demographic analysis. Before joining SGS Imogen was with the Reserve Bank of Australia as an economic analyst in the Economic Activity and Forecasting Division as a National Accounts Desk Officer and Business Investment Desk Officer.

Also joining the Sydney office is **Gislind Seitz**. Gislind is an economist with postgraduate qualifications in International Relations and International Business. For the past 5 years she has been working as a policy advisor and analyst across different policy fields, first at the German Federal Parliament in Berlin, then in Sydney at the Department of Commerce and the RTA.

Jennifer Finlay has joined the Canberra team. Jennifer is an urban planner and project manager, and comes to SGS from the ACT's Land Development Agency where she was a senior project manager on the Kingston Foreshore redevelopment project. She had previously worked with the ACT Planning Authority on planning system reform.

Judy Sutherland has joined the Melbourne office. Judy is an urban planner with several years experience in strategic planning in local government in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has strong background in local economic development, city development strategies and public policy.

Urbecon

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