

Submission to Inquiry into the Australian Government's role in the Development of Cities Queensland University of Technology, 26 July 2017.

Introduction

This submission is made by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT); specifically the Institute for Future Environments (The Institute).

QUT, through the Institute has an extensive cities research agenda and therefore views the Inquiry, with a focus on *Sustainability transitions in existing cities* and *Growing new and transitioning existing sustainable regional cities and towns*, as timely and relevant for the issues facing Australian cities.

Key challenges

The titles of the sub-inquiries identify sustainability of cities as a key focus of the Inquiry. However the Terms of Reference identify liveability, sustainability and resilience as key considerations with desired outcomes in terms of greater social equity and better health and wellbeing.

The management and planning of cities generally resides primarily with local government, with oversight from State Government. However, there are areas where the Australian Government plays a key direct or indirect role in the governance of our cities and regional centres. Liveability and sustainability outcomes are presently mostly realised through specific land and urban planning State-based legislation and local government regulatory overlays. Similarly, local government plays a strong role in resilience in terms of reducing the vulnerability of especially the built environment to natural disasters.

However, overwhelming natural disasters such as large floods, cyclones/storms and bushfires do occur. Following such events the Australian Government can become the insurer of last resort. This has been recognised to be problematic by a number of previous enquiries and investigations, yet the issue remains unresolved. In anticipation of future natural hazard events, there have been ongoing efforts from the Australian Government to invest more in the 'P' parts of the PPRR model of natural disaster management (Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery). This is in recognition that the economic efficiency of 'P' activities is greater by comparison to investing in the 'R' type activities.

As a specific example, with the changes in mobility on the horizon (e.g. automated vehicles, connected vehicles...) the transport infrastructure within and connecting our cities – a major determinant of resilience and liveability, requires an overhaul that goes beyond incremental adaptation over the next decades. A clear signal from the Australian Government is required to lead Australia into this transition and to provide guidelines on the vision of the future connected and resilient Australian city. Guidelines should include pathways on embracing and implementing new transport modes, recovering public space from not needed infrastructure, and concepts to ensure mobility for all members of the community (i.e. elderly, disabled...).

Recommendations

To this end, QUT wishes to highlight the central role that the Australian Government can play in ensuring the future resilience of Australian cities and regional centres through investing in resilience planning and preparation activities, and increasing the technological readiness of our urban centres. Specific activities include the provision of grants, direct capital assistance for hard and soft (social and natural) infrastructure that increases resilience,

New technology and opportunities are always at the forefront of discussions and drive activities, while the real need of implementation and evaluation frameworks is neglected. For example, major changes in transport and how communities will live in smart cities are and will be driven by industry and the Australian Government needs to address the implications ahead of time and think strategically beyond the immediate change. The time is now to act, before falling behind in legislation again like with the recent developments in the sharing economy (e.g. Uber, Airbnb...).