
SMART CITIES PLAN

City of Stirling Submission

14 June 2016

1. Preliminary Comments

The City of Stirling welcomes and supports the Federal Government's recognition of the importance of urban infrastructure investment being made in a way that delivers economic, social and environmental returns. There needs to be a change in the way infrastructure investment is used so that it stimulates urban regeneration rather than urban sprawl. The City would however like to see more detail on how the Smart Cities Plan is to be implemented, and looks forward to this being made available.

2. Challenges and Opportunities

The Smart Cities Plan identifies a number of challenges and opportunities that Australian cities face. The City's comments on these are outlined below.

a. Economic transition

The Smart Cities Plan seeks to support cities as they transition from economies dominated by the mining boom, to ones which support more diversified, technology and knowledge based industries.

The City of Stirling's "open for business" approach (refer Attachment) acknowledges the strategic advantages to locating within the City of Stirling, and has facilitated the completion of major urban regeneration projects. One such example is in the Mirrabooka Regional Centre, where the City and State government have invested \$25.7 million to implement an improvement strategy involving the redevelopment of the Mirrabooka Bus Station, improvements to the public realm, and the creation of new development sites. These works have been supplemented by reforms to the planning framework that will ultimately see over 2,000 dwellings and a doubling of the retail, commercial and other floor space (up to 196,220m²) by 2031. This is an example of the City's proactive approach to urban regeneration to facilitate economic investment in our major activity and employment centres.

The City is therefore supportive of this section, as it reflects the City's existing "open for business" approach to economic development.

b. Jobs

The Smart Cities Plan acknowledges that businesses will locate near areas with access to the largest number of potential customers and employees, and residents will locate where they can easily access jobs, goods and services.

Within the City of Stirling the Osborne Park area, which has developed as one of the City's key employment areas, has excellent accessibility due to the location of Glendalough and Stirling train stations, which are only minutes from the Perth central business district and are located within close proximity of medium density urban areas. Osborne Park, together with the Stirling City Centre, are considered to be Perth's second central business district ("job cluster"). Based on moderate employment projections, these areas are expected to provide 56,492 jobs by 2031. However, unless sufficient funding in urban infrastructure occurs,

maximising the benefits of these strategically located precincts will be compromised, as there will be inadequate infrastructure to support the increased population and economic activities in the area.

As the Smart Cities Plan identifies alternative funding models for urban infrastructure, this may ultimately enable the City to realise its vision for the Stirling City Centre and Herdsman Glendalough precincts, given they are directly aligned with the Smart Cities Plan vision. The City is therefore supportive of the Smart Cities Plan's prioritisation of cities which support the development of job clusters.

c. Housing

The City of Stirling is an existing urban area which has considerable employment opportunities. The strategic location of housing in close proximity to activity centres and/or transport corridors has already been reflected in all of the City's active strategic planning projects, and is also expanded on further in the City's draft Local Planning Strategy. Specifically, the City seeks to facilitate the location of higher density housing in activity centres and along high frequency transport corridors, whilst allowing for housing diversity by retaining lower density development in the remaining residential areas. The City is therefore supportive of the housing section of the Smart Cities Plan.

d. Transport

The '30 minute city' is a key concept of the Smart Cities Plan. The Smart Cities Plan anticipates a maximum travel time of 30 minutes for all journeys (i.e. not just workers). Despite the merits of this aspirational target, the notion of planning for a maximum of 30 minutes for all journeys appears to be implausible given the current context (i.e. urban sprawl) of Australian cities. The City therefore requests that this be modified to reference the average commute and not the maximum.

Additionally, whilst the '30 minute city' concept is commendable, its inclusion in the Smart Cities Plan appears to be simplistic. There is no discussion on the various transport modes that facilitate this 30 minute accessibility. It is a clearly understood urban planning principle that not all transport modes should be treated equally, and if a transport mode shift is to occur then this can only be facilitated by prioritising public transport, cycling and walking over private vehicles through infrastructure investment that supports a consolidated urban form. The City therefore submits there is a need to differentiate between mode types in order to achieve the 30 minute city concept of the Smart Cities Plan.

3. The Three Pillars of the Smart Cities Plan

a) Smart Investment

The City acknowledges and supports the appropriateness of investigating alternative funding methods in addition to grants, as this will in turn encourage consideration of reforms likely to improve infrastructure planning and decision making.

One of the outputs of the Smart Cities Plan is the commitment of \$50 million to fund an infrastructure financing unit, which will develop project business cases and financing and investment options. The City has ongoing experience in such projects (for example, the Stirling Alliance, which brought the state agencies, local government, and community and industry representatives together to implement the Stirling City Centre project). The City therefore advises of its recent experience and willingness to participate in such projects as anticipated under the Smart Cities model.

The City considers the Smart Investment pillar of the Smart Cities Plan to be based on sound economic and planning principles, however submits that the details are at this stage

insufficient to determine how and whether the anticipated outputs (collaboration on projects to facilitate their implementation in a way which provides to best financial outcome for the Australian taxpayers) will in fact occur.

b. Smart Policy

The primary mechanism of the Smart Policy pillar is a reimagining of the United Kingdom's 'City Deal' model. The introduction of City Deals represents an unprecedented interest in urban planning at the Federal level, and the City commends the Federal Government on this initiative given it is aligned with many of the City's urban regeneration projects.

Urban investment needs to be supported positive triple bottom line outcomes. The City asserts that urban infrastructure investment decisions should not just be made on the basis of how many people can be moved, but also about how urban change can be facilitated at a social, economic and environmental level. It is essential that the Smart Policy pillar encompass this principle.

The City is therefore supportive of the City Deal initiative, and requests that further consultation is undertaken with stakeholders at appropriate times to ensure the efficient implementation of City Deals in the Australian context.

The Smart Policy pillar also outlines various potential regulatory reforms, most of which are anticipated to result in improved planning practices. The City's only comment on the matter of regulatory reform is that any change should be preceded by a detailed cost benefit analysis and sufficient community consultation.

c. Smart Technology

The third pillar of the Smart Cities Plan is Smart Technology. This essentially seeks to ensure investment is "future proofed" to accommodate technological advances. This is a sound principle which the City supports.

4. Conclusion

The concepts proposed by the Smart Cities Plan are proven urban planning tools and are reflected in the City of Stirling's current projects. The City of Stirling supports the urban planning principles of the Smart Cities Plan, and welcomes an approach to infrastructure investment that is designed to facilitate urban renewal. The City looks forward to further details being made available as the policy is developed.