

Chapter 18

Integrating Regional and Infrastructure Planning: Lessons from South East Queensland, Australia

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ABSTRACT

Economic and social infrastructure provision presents a conundrum for urban planners, especially in high growth regional economies experiencing strong population growth, increasing demand for infrastructure services and limits to the state's capacity to sustain long-term investment strategies. This chapter considers the South East Queensland (SEQ) regional economy and the policy decisions taken in recent years to embed and integrate both regional planning and regional infrastructure investment strategies through statutory SEQ Regional Plan and SEQ Infrastructure Plans and Programs. This case study examines the benefits from this integrated approach, as well as the challenges facing the region. Some of the benefits of the integrated approach include land use transport integration, strategic approach to infrastructure provision, alignment of infrastructure planning with budgetary processes, and greater certainty for investments in the regional economy. The challenges for integrated planning are also numerous, and include: ensuing close co-operation between three levels of government and private sector, reconciling long term infrastructure planning with short term political imperatives, managing future uncertainty and financing future investments in land use and infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

Economic and social infrastructure provision presents a conundrum for urban planners especially in high growth regional economies experiencing

strong population growth, increasing demand for infrastructure services and limits to the state's capacity to sustain long-term investment strategies. A central question here is whether the state should take a supply-led approach to infrastructure provision that is carefully integrated with long-term planning

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objectives, or whether it adopts a demand response strategy that involves medium-term planning and demand management to resolve short-term supply problems. A complicating factor here is the important role that infrastructure plays in regional economies. The evidence suggests that investment is a key driver of regional economic development and makes an important contribution to output capacity, growth, productivity, private costs, incomes and the spatial distribution of industry. Investment in social infrastructure assists human capital development and quality of life. It is against this background that we consider the South East Queensland regional economy (SEQRE) and the policy decisions taken in recent years to embed and integrate both regional planning and regional infrastructure investment strategies through the statutory SEQ Regional Plan 2005-2026 (SEQRP) and SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program 2008-2026 (SEQIPP). A long-term fiscal policy approach is addressing long-term infrastructure service needs within a comprehensive and embedded approach to planning.

The main objective of the chapter is to evaluate the integrated planning approach in South East Queensland. The chapter first provides an overview of the South East Queensland regional economy, followed by the critique of the SEQRP and annual SEQIPP. The chapter delves into several issues such as: land use; transport integration; alignment of regional planning and strategic infrastructure planning; and links between infrastructure, economic and urban development. The chapter highlights both the strengths of the integrated approach taken by the Queensland Government, as well as the planning challenges facing the region.

The South East Queensland Regional Economy

The South East Queensland Regional Economy (SEQRE) is the fastest growing in Australia and one of the fastest growing provincial economies in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD). SEQRE occupies a land area of 22 420 sq km, stretching 240 kilometers from Noosa in the north to Coolangatta in the south and 140 kilometers west to Toowoomba in the State of Queensland. The population of the region is heavily urbanized and concentrated along the eastern seaboard.¹ Queensland's state population in 2007 stood at 4 182 000 and growth in the 10 years to June 2007, at 19%, nearly twice that of New South Wales or Victoria and the nation as a whole. SEQRE had a population of 2 769 896 at 30 June 2007 and accounted for 66.2% and 13.3% of the population of the State of Queensland and Australia respectively (OESR, 2007).

The SEQRE is the third largest and the fastest growing of Australia's regional economies with regional population growth in the five years to June 2007 of 13.5%. In the past five years, regional growth exceeded the rate for both Queensland (12.5%) and the nation (6.9%) (OESR, 2008; ABS, 2008). In the SEQRE, population growth was strongest on the Gold Coast (19.1%) and the Sunshine Coast (18.4%) local government areas, suggesting that future development will mainly occur along the 250km seaboard between Coolangatta and Noosa. SEQRE also draws its population growth from diverse sources, with natural increase accounting for 34%, net interstate migration 31%, and net overseas migration 29% (ABS, 2006) (See Table 1).

Table 1. SEQRE Population Growth 2002-2007 (derived from ABS, 2008; OESR, 2008)

000s	2002	2007	Change %
Brisbane	1 667	1 857	11.4
West Moreton	67	74	10.4
Sunshine Coast	256	303	18.4
Gold Coast	450	536	19.1
Total SEQRE	2 440	2 770	13.5
Queensland	3 715	4 181	12.5
Australia	19 641	21 077	6.9

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