PURPOSE:

The following submission serves to inform and assist the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage with their inquiry into 'Sustainable Cities'.

TITLE:

Structuring an 'urban regeneration' process

INTRODUCTION:

An increasingly complex world perpetuated by increasingly complex *glocal*[1] dynamics requires a far more sophisticated approach than those that currently characterise strategic urban planning, design, and delivery.

The paradox confronting global society is that while the global economy is being promoted hand over fist, other global challenges are being dealt with in a less than systemic manner ultimately compromising the very thing that a successful global economy is dependent on. It was this conundrum that gave rise to the concept of sustainability and mobilised entire governments and professions.

The difficulty however has always been in knowing where to start with such a mammoth undertaking. That is:

- what is sustainability?,

- how do we achieve it (coordination across disparate political, cultural and geographic agenda is critical)? and

- how do we know if we've achieved it?

One thing that is clear is that traditional land-use strategies and development frameworks such as DCP's, LEP's etc, and top-down delivery result in little more than the *physical* regeneration of a city and are generally too simplistic and therefore too inadequate in guiding the development of complex, sustainable outcomes.

What is needed is a planning, design and development approach that combines physical regeneration with the regeneration of the social and economic fabric of an area.

- The practice of 'urban regeneration' seeks to re-examine the basis or the value system/s which motivate planning and design strategies and outcomes.

- It is based fundamentally on an inclusive process that is both top-down and bottom-up.

- It strives to highlight the community's responsibilities when making decisions and not on their indiscriminate rights.

- It seeks to construct sophisticated partnerships and devolve decision making.

This is unlike 'urban renewal' which is largely driven by physical development objectives (of which Green Sq is an example) and examples of indiscriminate 'urban consolidation' which are driven by an even narrower agenda aimed at achieving densities in and around transport nodes.

Put more simply while most other 'approaches' have to date been pre-occupied with creating 'space', urban regeneration is ultimately concerned with creating 'place'.

REGENERATION - DEVELOPING SOCIETIES *NOT* DEVELOPING INSPITE OF THEM

"To begin with a self-evident truth: the wealth of any society is the sum total of the social, economic and environmental values it holds" (Malcolm Latham, pg 10, SSDC 'A renewal strategy', June 2003)

It's worth noting that 'regeneration' is about where and how we intervene and having a strategic framework that allows us to make sense of the cumulative impact of all our interventions.

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[1] The term **Glocal** is a combination of the terms 'Global and Local' and seeks to encapsulate the challenge that many communities find themselves subject to at present. That is, balancing global objectives with local aspirations and values.

These interventions are 'catalytic' and through strategic thinking (characterised by a truly integrated planning, decision making and delivery approach), can be substantiated in terms of their ability to give rise to the continued, self-sustaining regeneration of a 'locality' so that it evolves into 'place'. The process of regeneration has three core components.

PARTNERSHIP, PROCESS, PRODUCT

1. an *arms-length*[2] **partnership/s** required to plan, deliver, monitor and manage the regeneration agenda,

- A partnership would comprise public/ private board structure. This ensures that public and private funding arrangements can be employed (ie match-funding) and that 'delivery' rather than just 'advocacy' ensues. **Eg** key businesses, landowners, state and local government, peak bodies, interest groups, NGO's etc. It also ensures that the limited taxpayer's money available can be used to leverage additional funds from the private sector and that way still result in government delivering on its responsibilities.

- It needs to have an administrative competency made up of officers from various stakeholders (agenda delivery mechanism) which are specific to the partnership.

- The partnership should be a clearing house for gripes, grievances and differences with a view to ultimately becoming the forum within which these differences are reconciled and a strategic partnership agenda is developed. It is the agenda setting mechanism.

2. Plan, monitor and manage is the **process** by which this agenda is developed, translated into a strategy and set of actions, implemented and reviewed so that it remains valid.

- A strategic agenda should in turn allow the partnership to develop a 'regeneration strategy'. Critically the strategy needs to develop the physical, social and economic role of the 'area under regeneration' within the broader cultural (includes triple bottom line) aspirations of the city and region.

- The Strategy can formalise the partnerships mandate to act as a critical mechanism through which government can deliver without extending their existing resources.

- The strategy will inturn give rise to short, medium and long term actions required to deliver on broad regeneration objectives. The strategy will also allow the partnership to demonstrate the desired cumulative impact of specific actions or interventions.

3. the **product/s** are the physical, social and economic programmes and therefore outcomes that address the locality and the values and lifestyles of those that live, work and visit.

- The resulting outcomes make for an important distinction between 'regeneration' and say 'renewal'. Apart from the physical development programs generated by this approach, the process of regeneration develops, in parallel, the necessary social and economic programs required to either integrate an area with its surrounds or if it is a 'blank canvass', provide it with the critical mass required to spawn and sustain a constantly evolving regenerative process.

- Another important distinction between the outcomes of 'regeneration' and those of 'renewal' is that renewal often leads to 'gentrification'. That is, an imposed vision that often changes the cultural dynamic of an area. This then becomes a process of *validating a created vision*. Regeneration on the other hand takes its que from the potential that exists in an area and therefore seeks to build on it. This then becomes a process of *creating a valid vision*.

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[2] **'Arms-length'** *is a formal term of reference used in the UK to reinforce that public/ private partnerships are independent of any one particular interest group and that statutory authorities are still obligated to exercise transparency regardless of their representation on the partnership.*

CONCLUSION

No where in the world is the challenge of employing 'urban regeneration' programs more critical than in Australia.

Australia is in the interesting position where it not only has five or so of the world's top ten most liveable cities it also vies with the United States for the number one position as the world's greatest polluter (The U.S and Australia consistently generate over 20 tons of CO_2 per person, per year. This is in contrast to China where the average is between 3-4 tons. However as China develops a more aspirational society this is likely to increase unless it adopts methods that satisfy the aspiration but come at a vastly lower cost than say our lifestyle in Australia).

So, while China and other countries develop an aspirational culture and lifestyle (and not one necessarily in accordance with western values), we have a responsibility to ourselves if nothing else, to lead by example and advance the way we plan, design and develop our cities so that we reduce the prohibitive cost of our lifestyles while maintaining the high standards we're accustomed to. Only then can we expect other countries to adopt better practice and in so doing ensure that they contribute rather than detract, from our quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That 'The Committee' consider:

- The benefits of a federal 'Urban Regeneration' agenda and funding program not dissimilar to that of the UK's Single Regeneration Budget Award.

- That a Federal advocacy body similar to CABE (UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) with State chapters, preside over the promotion of a more sophisticated urban planning and delivery approach and the management of an 'Urban Regeneration' program.

- That a further inquiry be undertaken into what the most effective and appropriate 'arms-length' delivery mechanisms might be to not only bridge the gap between Federal, State and Local political levels, but also engage NGO's, professional peak bodies, and the private sector in an effort to deliver physical, social and economic regeneration in a manner that maintains our quality of life while reducing the unsustainable costs associated with it.

This submission was prepared by Ingo Kumic, Senior Project Manager SSDC and is supported by Judith Peters, General Manager SSDC and does not currently have the formal endorsement by the SSDC Board.

28th January 2004

Secretary:.......................................

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE