

Greater Western Sydney: An Alternative Model for Australian Central-Local Relations?

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In a recent article, Lefevre highlighted the renewed interest and experimentation in metropolitan scale governance. (Lefevre 1998). He identifies pressures generating this renewed interest as: pressures of urban expansion, development of information and communication technologies, crises in the welfare state, and globalization. Although the article focuses on cities in North America and Europe, the same pressures are faced in Australian cities. Sydney, the largest Australian city, grapples with a growing population approaching four million and the consequent problems of sprawling urban expansion. Australians have a high take-up rate of new technologies, and information technology and telecommunications offer new prospects for innovative ways of operating in the metropolis. Health, education, employment, and public safety are all high on political agendas. Sydney, Australia's financial capital with increasing relevance to the global economy, is now regarded as a global city (Searle 1996). Metropolitan governance is an important issue in Sydney.

Responses to these pressures are twofold. First, the need to find tools and structures to deal with the issues. Secondly, introduction and mobilization of new actors (Lefevre 1998:9). Approaches to metropolitan governance over the last 30 years, Lefevre argues, have been influenced in one direction or the other by the metropolitan model—larger, more efficient units of governance—and public choice theory where “institutional fragmentation and smallness are essential elements in maintaining competi-

tion; they alone permit public choice.” (Lefevre 1998:10).

Over the last three years there has been a coalescence of initiatives in Greater Western Sydney, part of Metropolitan Sydney that offers prospect of an intermunicipal, metropolitan-scale approach to governance in the region. In this there is the prospect of collaborative partnerships being forged between three key “actors:” the New South Wales State Government, the association of the 12 local authorities that make up the region, and the University of Western Sydney. Many peak organizations in Greater Western Sydney contribute to the region's development. Notwithstanding their vital contribution they still represent particular interests or groups such as economic development, business, and commerce, or environmental management. Cross-membership between many of these organizations, and particularly membership of local government and university boards, committees, etc., ensures a high degree of coordination. The three “actors” presented in this paper were chosen because they offer prospect of moving beyond coordination to governance; particularly the prospect of new approaches to inter-municipal, metropolitan-scale governance. It is these three that, potentially at least, can maintain a whole-of-place perspective. Each has or is establishing partnerships with many of the peak organizations. The prospect contemplated here is not to replace them or usurp their role but to add value to them.

This paper describes a background to these initiatives in Greater Western Sydney and discusses

prospects for an innovative approach to governance involving links between a central government, local governments, and a university. It serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it is intended to present to this conference case of an Australian approach to central-local relations; relations that, at least in the Australian context are an innovation from past practice in Sydney. Secondly, preparing the paper provided the author, in an action theory framework, with an opportunity to pause and reflect on these events. The perspective of the paper is that of a participant observer, as the author has an active role in developing and working in the partnerships. The action research paradigm forms a foundation for the paper to the extent that it manifests an observation and reflection by the author on plans and actions over the last two years. As such the paper also includes a reflection on local governance drawn from the author's experience of Australian local governance reform over the last decade. One of the problems faced when writing papers such as this is that events unfold as you write, tempting you to add that little extra reflection. In the end, these reflections stop at the end of June 1998: The first steps have been taken and the prospects for a collaborative partnership show great promise.

Metropolitan and Community Governance

Lefevre introduces theoretical arguments and experiments in metropolitan government. He discusses first the traditional components of metropolitan governments: strong political legitimacy; meaningful autonomy; wide-ranging jurisdiction; "relevant" territorial coverage. Experiments in metropolitan government during the 1960s-1970s are canvassed, concluding that for the most part they failed due to, on the one hand, authoritarian application from the top and, on the other hand, lack of legitimacy from the bottom. (Lefevre 1998)

Reflecting new forms of public action emerging in the 1990s, in the second half of his paper, Lefevre's focus moves from government to governance.

The present history of metropolitan governments is a good illustration of the development of institutional policies. Metropolitan governance high-

lights values of negotiation, partnership, voluntary participation, and flexibility in the constitution of new structures. In doing so, it presents us with a radically different idea of the institution. It is no longer presented at the start, created in advance, ready-to-use, but appears as a result of a constitutive process. It is the process which radically transforms yesterday's metropolitan model. Metropolitan governance does not consider the institution to be pre-established—on the contrary. The objective to be achieved (roughly speaking, the form and content of the metropolitan authority) is not fixed in advance, but becomes the product of the system of actors as the process unfolds. Thus, the process has its own dynamic, fed by the actors themselves. But this feeding is not left to chance; it is done through specific forms and negotiated procedures which frame and punctuate the process (Lefevre 1998:18).

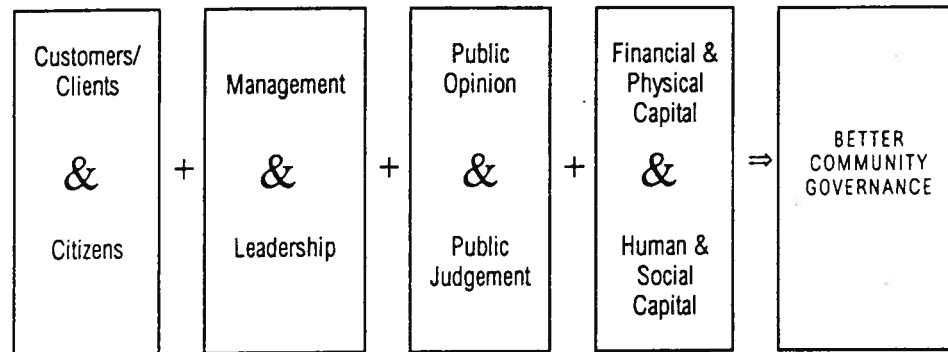
Rethinking Community Governance

Based on 10 years work as both a researcher of local government in Australia and internationally, and an adviser to governments on local government reform, this author reflected on the experience taking the opportunity to rethink local or community governance. This section is a summary of those reflections.

For the last two decades many Australians have been expressing concern about the appropriateness of this historically given system of government. At a national level, the debate includes the question of whether Australia should change to a republic. While the republic debate, and severing the remaining ties with Great Britain, is important, for many Australians it is matters of local governance which impact more directly on their lives, and for which they express more direct concern. This section of the paper counterbalances the largely instrumental reform agenda in Australia, by introducing countervailing factors of local governance. It is an interlude rather than a digression, as the issues raised here should be addressed if Greater Western Sydney is to achieve relevant and meaningful governance.

At the national level reform of intergovernmental relations focused on federal-state relations with

Figure 1. Components of Local Governance Reform



little attention directed to federal-local relations. With the election of the Conservative Coalition Government in 1996, federal-local relations have moved even further from the agenda. At the state level, respective state governments have enforced extensive reform on local government, directed, primarily, to improved efficiency/effectiveness, and greater public accountability. The prevailing focus of this reform has been largely on the roles and functions of government; of making government as an instrument better. The so-called new public management emphasizes "optimal use of resources and achievements of results...performance excellence, effective outcomes, and value for money..."(Tucker 1997:82). Local government reform has concentrated on four instrumental factors: increased customer/client focus; better management; listening to consumer opinion; development of financial and physical capital (Sproats 1997). This has led to improved local management but not necessarily better local governance.

While reform has been largely instrumental, as has been the case in other countries, the 1990s in Australia have seen a rising interest in the civil society and community governance. While there is widespread disinterest in participation in public policy, in a countervailing way there are increasing demands for accountability of the actions of governments and calls for engagement of an informed citizenry in collectively addressing community problems.

To move from local management to local governance to the four instrumental factors must be added countervailing dimensions of citizens, leadership, judgment, and human/social capital. These are shown in Figure 1 as dimensions of local governance reform. The word countervailing is used to reflect that in each dimension there are two sides to the one coin; neither side is inherently more important than the other.

Citizens As Well As Customers

In recent times staff in the public sector have been admonished to treat people dealing with their organization as customers or clients. CEOs strive to build customer-oriented or customer-friendly cultures in their local authorities. In his National Performance Review, U.S. Vice President Al Gore urged Americans to view

...themselves as customers of government rather than as citizens. The role of citizen...is inherently weak—the individual voter cannot determine the outcome of an election—whereas customers can compel response to their wishes by insisting on receiving value for what they pay or shopping elsewhere. Firms survive in markets. Bureaucrats should similarly endure the discipline of competition (Lynn, 1997).

Set against the vice president's national perspective Daniel Kemmis, former mayor of Missoula, Montana, provides a more grassroots view. Kemmis sees hope for the future in a revival of citizenship.

No amount of reforming institutions that are widely and rightly perceived to be beyond human scale will heal our political culture until we begin to pay attention once again to democracy as a human enterprise. Without healing the human base of politics, we will not restore democracy itself. One thing alone will give us the capacity to heal our politics and to confront the problems and opportunities that politics must address. That one thing is a deeply renewed human experience of citizenship (Kemmis 1995:6).

A focus on people as customers implies undue reliance on the marketplace as an effective mechanism for addressing community issues. In the 1995 (Australian) Boyer Lectures Cox argued the market individualizes needs. Community governance, on the other hand, implies collective responsibilities and decision making. "The notion of citizenship implies a notion of the city—of the polis, of the public realm, of public purposes, publicly debated and determined...To narrow the scope of public power, to take activities out of the public domain and put them in the private, is, by definition, to narrow the sphere of citizenship" (Marquand 1989).

Leadership As Well As Management

There seems little need to explain management; its influence has been all pervading in the public sector for the last 20 years. Shelves groan under the weight of management books extolling the latest techniques, certain to produce better organizations. One selection of 10 of the best books on management (Zbar 1994) covers the following topics: work and economics in the 21st century (Reich); systems thinking in the learning organization (Senge); steering not rowing in the public sector (Osborne and Gaebler); employee empowerment and networks (Peters); networking management (Limerick and Cunnington); improving customer service (Carlzon); becoming a more effective person (Covey); women in management (Still); change, shamrocks, and federalism (Handy); society of knowledge and organizations (Drucker). These are familiar authors and topics to managers in the public and private sectors. There is no shortage of management advice.

Immense resources have been expended on becoming better public sector managers, and the dividends are evident. Countervailing management, however, is leadership. Leadership is neither the same as management, nor is it a subset of it. The two, management and leadership, are manifest in successful organizations (Kotter 1990, 1996; Stace and Dunphy 1994). It is not one or the other, it is both. Hickman (1990) argues that what organizations need are the skills of both: the practical, analytical, orderly mind of a manager, and the experimental, visionary, creative soul of a leader.

From his experience working in disadvantaged communities on the fringe of Washington D.C., Wallis (1995) makes the point that "We long for political leaders who would be community builders and not polarizers, public servants who practice the art of bringing diverse peoples together for projects of common good, instead of power brokers who represent only those who have the most clout."

Public Judgment As Well As Opinion

Public opinion has always been a poor determinant of public policy. In a local government context, as an example, if asked to express their opinion, people will usually say they want more services and fewer taxes. Public opinion has a place for seeking reactions to policy proposals but judgment is demanded for policy adoption.

After a long career in the British civil service, Sir Geoffrey Vickers wrote one of the best books on management in the public realm—or least in this author's eyes (Vickers 1967). In his book Vickers differentiates between judgments of fact and judgments of value. A more recent writer, Daniel Yankelovich—an American—described public judgment as:

...a particular form of public opinion that exhibits (1) more thoughtfulness, more weighting of alternatives, more genuine engagement with the issue, more taking into account a wider variety of factors than ordinary public opinion polls, and (2) more emphasis on the normative, valuing, ethical side of questions than on the factual, informational side...(It)...is a state of highly developed public opinion that exists once people have engaged an issue, considered it from all

sides, understood the choices it leads to, and accepted the full consequences of the choices they make (Yankelovich 1991).

Judgment depends on knowledge: useful, relevant knowledge. In a very interesting book Michael Gibbons and other authors discuss a new paradigm of knowledge production (Gibbons 1994). They describe a new mode of producing the knowledge we require in contemporary society. Although the authors direct their attention to universities and their role in knowledge production, there are principles and implications for community governance. Knowledge, they argue, has been produced traditionally through setting and solving problems in contexts governed by the largely academic interests of specific communities. It is disciplinary based, homogeneous, hierarchical, and its acceptance determined largely by peer (mostly academic) review. This, they call Mode 1. A new mode—they call it Mode 2—is emerging to parallel traditional paradigms. In Mode 2, the production of new knowledge we need in contemporary society is carried out in the context of application, it is transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, heterarchical, and transient, and more socially accountable and reflexive. These interesting ideas and observations are beginning to shape the relationship between universities—my own for instance—and their communities. Gibbons and his colleagues have opened a new dimension for theories of community governance.

In a much heavier work, Nino examines the deliberative character of democracy (Nino 1996). Comparing the moral philosophies of Rawls and Habermas, Nino argues that democracy can be likened to moral conversation and can be valued because of its capacity to generate an impartial perspective, one that takes into account the interests of all citizens. "Democracy (says Nino) can be defined as a process of moral discussion with a time limit" (Nino 1996:118).

One of the reasons we so readily rely on opinion is that judgment as defined by these writers is hard. It is much easier to parade public opinion as justification for decisions. It may be hard but we need

to explore ways of engaging citizens in moving beyond mere opinion to exercising community judgment.

Human and Social Capital As Well As Financial/Physical Capital

In the second of her Boyer Lecturers, Eva Cox discussed four major capital measures: financial capital, physical capital, human capital, and social capital (Cox 1995:15). Financial capital has dominated the Australian agenda with descending interest in the other three. Building communities requires more than investment in financial and physical capital, it demands investment in human capital, "...the total of our skills and knowledge" (Cox 1995:15), and social capital. Cox used this term—social capital—to refer to "...the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust and facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Cox 1995:15).

We must put a high priority, therefore, on growing social capital by offering opportunities for trust and cooperation. The social institutions which govern and influence us must operate in ways which value diversity and belonging. They must also be able to withstand debate and questioning (Cox 1995:16).

Based on his extensive research of local democracy in Italy, Robert Putnam makes the point that "building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work" (Putnam 1993:185). Putnam concluded that democracy works best where civic community is strong.

In a recent publication the (Australian) Centre for Independent Studies examines social capital. As one of an interesting mix of authors, Mark Latham—the Federal Labor Member for Werriwa (a federal electorate in Greater Western Sydney)—argues that "issues concerning the strength and composition of social capital are critical to the successful governance of society" (Latham 1997:7). The basis of governance in civil society, he argues, is more than the formal institutions of government, it includes "the interaction of citizens through voluntary associations, networks, and other forms of contact which, when regarded as a whole, represent the self-governance of

community life" (Latham 1997:7). Dismissing what he sees as Eva Cox's preference for a command economy is the social sector, Latham argues:

The success of a society relies on an appropriate balance between competition and cooperation in its values and institutions: competition to foster innovation and creativity; cooperation to build social trust and inclusiveness (Latham 1997:34).

Sturges, another of the authors, concludes his chapter:

We know something about trust, norms, and networks and what causes this kind of social capital to accumulate, but a great deal of work remains to be done. In particular, there is much still to be done in communicating to politicians and public policymakers in Australia, and indeed the general public, the importance of these social virtues to our future economic prosperity (Sturges 1997:78).

An Australian Context of Governance in Greater Western Sydney

Local governance is not new in Australia, it has a long history, stretching back thousands of years. The present federal government structure is relatively recent, a legacy of European settlement. Following earlier visits to Australia by European explorers in the 17th century, permanent European settlement of Australia commenced in 1788 with the establishment of a penal colony in Sydney. To relieve its overcrowded prisons the British Government dispatched 736 convicts to serve their sentences in this great southland they had recently discovered and claimed to be empty; "terra nullius"—a land without people. The continent, however, was not empty, as indigenous Aborigines had occupied the land for at least 40,000 years. Estimates of the indigenous population at the time range between 300,000 and 1,400,000. Through religion and rules of custodianship (matrilineal descent in what is now New South Wales), indigenous Australians exercised local governance. With society organized on a nomadic tribal system, no central control operated.

Starting from Sydney, European exploration and gradual colonization extended across the vast conti-

nent, a continent 20 times the size of Japan. Throughout the 19th century the separate colonies of the then-British Empire established forms of government to manage the affairs of a growing population. The model of governance was derived from the British colonial service, based on the military model. During this period—and into the 20th century—the indigenous system of local governance was subjugated as part of the sorrowful treatment of the Australian aborigines.

The Australian Federal System

In 1901, Australia became a nation when the six separate colonies of the then-British Empire joined as a federation and formulated a Constitution. Australia remains a federation of states, each of which retains its own constitution, government, and laws. These six states—New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania—together with two territories—Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory—cover the entire continent. The national parliament sits in Canberra within the Australian Capital Territory.

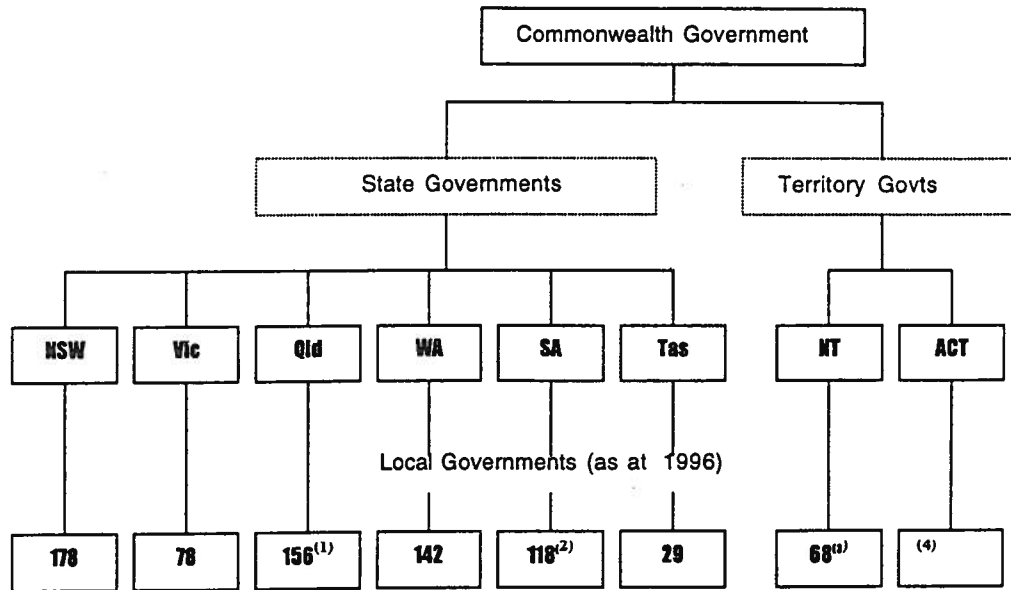
As shown in Figure 2, Australia currently has one national government, eight state/territory governments, and 769 local governments. Within this system, local governments derive their position and power from respective state governments, local government not being recognized in the Australian Constitution.

Based on an aggressive immigration policy after World War 2 Australia has grown into one of the most urbanized—88 percent urban—and multicultural nations on earth—one in four of the current population were born overseas. In some areas of Greater Western Sydney half the community was born overseas.

Greater Western Sydney: A Brief Description

With a population of 1.4 million, a gross domestic product of \$45 billion, and the third largest market place in Australia, Greater Western Sydney has become a focal point for regional development. The region forms part of Metropolitan Sydney, is the larg-

Figure 2. Levels of Australian Governments



- Notes:
- (1) Includes 31 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Government Bodies
 - (2) Includes 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Government Bodies
 - (3) Includes 61 community government councils, incorporated associations and special purpose towns
 - (4) Many local government functions are undertaken by the ACT Government

est by area covering 8,819 square kilometers, and accommodates more than one third of the population. The region is structured into the 12 local government authorities shown in Table 1. Until recently the region was considered only as the western suburbs of Sydney. At a rapid rate Greater Western Sydney is establishing its own identity as a multi-urban, metropolitan-scale region in its own right.

The traditional owners of the region now called Greater Western Sydney are the Woodland Darug people (or Dharug, an alternative spelling). Darug occupation of the region dates back 30,000 years. Words that are now synonymous with modern Australia—such as boomerang, koala, jumbuk—come from the Darug language, as do current place names in Greater Western Sydney such as Parramatta, Mulgoa, and Kurrajong (Mossfield 1998). Within

two years of smallpox being introduced in 1789, 50-90 percent of the Darug population had died. Although many sources claim the Darugs all died out last century, there were still 50 Darug people living on a Hawkesbury River reserve at the turn of the century. Now there are many Darug descendants in Sydney. Over 300 descendants of the Darug people held a reunion in 1990. At least one sacred site forbidden to women is still maintained, and some dreaming stories survive (Australia Street 1998).

Three Significant Initiatives

The key question of this paper contemplates the potential and prospect of three significant initiatives creating a dynamic new approach to governance in Greater Western Sydney. Those initiatives—all within the last three years are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Local Authorities of Greater Western Sydney

LGA/region	Pop. 1996	% born overseas	Pop. 2005	Area Km ²
WSROC Councils				
Baulkham Hills	125,553	24%	140,000	381
Blacktown	239,765	30%	250,000	241
Blue Mountains	74,870	17%	78,500	1,405
Fairfield	188,849	51%	202,100	101
Hawkesbury	59,137	14%	59,000	2,793
Holroyd	83,681	31%	85,500	40
Liverpool	124,424	34%	140,200	313
Parramatta	142,993	34%	142,000	60
Penrith	167,927	22%	176,300	407
MACROC Councils				
Camden	33,129	16%	56,000	206
Campbelltown	148,249	24%	154,900	312
Wollondilly	34,639	14%	38,200	2,560
GWS	1,423,216	29%	1,524,700	8,819
Sydney metropolitan area	3,608,814	32%		
NSW	6,203,894	22%		
Australia	18,311,486	21%		

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics and Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board

Table 2. Three Significant Initiatives

Organizations	Initiatives
Western Sydney Regional Organization of Councils (WSROC) and MacArthur Regional Organization of Councils (MACROC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Team West ■ 1998 Regional Agenda
University of Western Sydney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Western Sydney Research Institute
NSW State Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minister for Western Sydney ■ Office of Western Sydney

Of themselves, each is significant and will contribute positively to development of Greater Western Sydney but of interest in this paper is their potential, in collaborative partnership, to create an innovative inter-municipal, metropolitan-scale approach to governance in the region. This section provides a brief overview of each initiative. Content for each has been taken from material available from the respective organizations. Acknowledgment is made to each in turn. Each person acknowledged is a key "actor" in developing the partnerships.

WSROC/MACROC and TeamWest¹

The Western Sydney Regional Organization of Councils (WSROC) is a voluntary association of nine councils in Greater Western Sydney. For 25 years WSROC has operated with a mission:

...to secure—through research, lobbying, and the fostering of cooperation between councils—a sustainable lifestyle for the people of Western Sydney and the provision of infrastructure such that no one should have to leave the region to have access to the sorts of amenities, services and opportunities others in urban Australia take for granted.

TeamWest grew out of WSROC's response to a review by the New South Wales (NSW) Government in the early 1990s of the 1988 Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Sydney. While there were some worthwhile elements in the 1988 strategy, WSROC, along with many other organizations, was highly critical of its lack of recognition of the distinct regional differences within Sydney and, even more importantly, the lack of a detailed implementation strategy. WSROC also sought to widen the debate by producing a vision for what Western Sydney could look like in 20 years. They lobbied strenuously for a more detailed implementation process that recognized the role of the distinct regions that exist within the metropolitan area. WSROC was subsequently successful in obtaining a grant under the Federal Government's program for Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP).

In the period between WSROC's application and receipt of the ILAP grant, the NSW Government was working on the new metropolitan strategy—cities for

the 21st century. WSROC was active in the period, successfully getting many, though not all, of its demands met in the final strategy. Widespread perceptions remained, however, that the strategy still lacked emphasis on implementation, had limited regional input, concentrated on physical rather than social outcomes, was under-resourced and lacked accountability.

Having been successful with its ILAP application, WSROC launched the TeamWest project utilizing an external consultant. Although WSROC had been initially the most active and had initiated the project the Macarthur Regional Organization of Councils (MACROC)—representing the three southern councils of Greater Western Sydney—joined TeamWest. A key element of the project was a steering committee made up of the two ROCs and other key stakeholders in the region including the federal and state governments. The final report was presented in September 1997.

What Is TeamWest All About?

TeamWest's purpose is to deliver better planning and better services to the people who live and work in Greater Western Sydney. The TeamWest approach applies a simple underlying model that links planning, policy, and performance within Greater Western Sydney. That model responds to three main influences—the Metropolitan Strategy itself, broader social, economic, and environmental trends that impact on the region and local priorities at a subregional level.

The central idea on which TeamWest has been developed is that achieving regional social, economic, and environmental outcomes depends not only on resources and skills but also on organization. The region needs to become better at harnessing people, resources, expertise, and information to pursue widely-shared outcomes. The intention is to achieve more consistent, systematic, and predictable processes for collaboration, communication, and decision making.

TeamWest integrates four elements:

- easier access to better research and information about the state of the region and the social, economic, and environmental changes to which it has to respond;

- a clearer, more practical definition of an agenda of priorities and goals shared widely across the region;
- improved delivery of services (including the provision of social and physical infrastructure), adopting increasingly a place management approach; and
- more demanding monitoring and evaluation of the match between what happens on the ground and the plans and priorities that are important to the region.

None of these four basic elements is important without reference to the others.

Some Basic Principles

1. *TeamWest* is crossfactual and relies on collaboration between government, business, and the community sector. The focus of *TeamWest* is on the social, economic, and environmental development of the region as well as on the specific challenges of urban planning and management.
2. *TeamWest* is not a new organization or a separate bureaucracy. It works by drawing on the resources, skills, and experience of key stakeholders in the region to set and achieve regional social, economic, and environmental outcomes. What actually constitutes *TeamWest* at any given time and at any given level will be the people and organizations actually involved in a specific task or function.
3. Making *TeamWest* work is like designing and sailing a boat at the same time. It will change as the people in the region keep improving their capacity to work together on specific projects, priorities, and initiatives.
4. *TeamWest* is about facilitation, not control. Individual organizations continue to have their own agendas that they plan for and pursue.
5. *TeamWest* relies on the trust, confidence, and goodwill of the organizations and interests in the region. Their collective commitment provides its only sustainable source of legitimacy and authority, both within the region and in the region's relationships with the state government.

6. *TeamWest* is unequivocally part of the broader movement away from traditional functional structure for planning and service delivery and towards a concern with outcomes and results in specific "places."

Managing the Process

TeamWest requires a minimum of organizational infrastructure to achieve two important outcomes:

- to improve the way in which the region sets priorities and goals that reflect the needs, values, and circumstances within the region and then advocates those priorities with the state and federal governments and with organizations and interests within the region. This outcome will be reflected in a regional agenda.
- to improve the link between the region and the wider process of metropolitan urban planning and management. This outcome is about implementing the regional agenda, turning its priorities into infrastructure and services to improve the social, economic, and environmental condition of the region.

Under the *TeamWest* model the Greater Western Sydney Regional Priorities Group (RPG) of representatives from within key regional organisations in local government, business, and the community sector has been established. The RPG will provide the main focus for implementing the *TeamWest* process. The real work of *TeamWest*, though, will remain the responsibility of the agencies and individuals involved in specific issues and projects.

As well as the Priorities Group, there will be an annual Regional Conference to (a) review performance and outcomes against the priorities of the regional agenda, and (b) refine and change, where necessary, the regional agenda itself. The other organizational element will be the current Regional Subcommittee (RSQ of the Metropolitan Strategy Committee. The RSC provides a focus for managing the implementation of metropolitan urban planning and management strategies at the regional level.

The first regional agenda was signed off by the members of the Regional Priorities Group (listed

below) and presented to the Minister for Western Sydney in April 1998:

- Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board
- Greater Western Sydney Regional Chamber of Commerce
- GROW Employment Council
- Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust
- Macarthur Waste Board
- MACROC
- University of Western Sydney
- Western Sydney Community Forum
- Western Sydney Waste Board
- WESTIR (A community-based research and information organization)
- WSROC

The 1998 Regional Agenda identified 70 priority items in four areas: economic development, human services, integrated environmental management, and information and resources.

While responsibility for the work rests with the Regional Priorities Group, members have particular lead responsibilities.

University of Western Sydney²

The University of Western Sydney (UWS), established in 1989, is one of Australia's newest and most dynamic universities. It is Australia's only truly federated university, comprising four cooperative and interrelated elements:

- Office of Vice Chancellor
- UWS Hawkesbury
- UWS Macarthur
- UWS Nepean

A distinctive feature of the university is its clear identification with the region. As reflected in its mission, the university exists to serve the people of Greater Western Sydney by giving them access to an education that will: enhance their job prospects; enrich their lives; and help them to take part in and contribute to Australian society and culture. That combination of community service and the pursuit of excellence and knowledge is a worthy mission for a university of the future.

The Mission

A university of international standing and outlook, whose students and staff achieve excellence in scholarship, teaching, learning, research, and service to the community, with particular benefit for the people of Greater Western Sydney.

UWS has experienced rapid growth in its first 10 years, with a student body growing to more than 22,000 studying in a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and research degrees. The research profile is wide ranging, innovative, and growing rapidly. Twelve major research centers carry out work in fields as diverse as science, farming, health care, international management, and social issues.

Western Sydney Research Institute (WSRI)

In keeping with its commitment to development of Greater Western Sydney—including active participation in *TeamWest*—in 1997 UWS established the Western Sydney Research Institute (WSRI) as a multidisciplinary research institute to help meet the extensive research needs of Western Sydney. It is a vehicle for coordinated, strategic, and targeted research in Western Sydney. It acts as a hub for interaction between researchers and key organizations committed to the development of the region of Greater Western Sydney. It was initiated by the University of Western Sydney but has been established to work with a variety of partner organizations interested in Greater Western Sydney. Its members are involved in a variety of research projects across three broad fields of study: environmental management, regional economic development and planning, and urban social and cultural development.

Developing Research Partnerships

The institute draws together the work of the major research centers and groups within UWS working in partnership with key regional organizations, business, and industry. The development of partnerships with many of the region's key organizations, as well as government departments and bodies, busi-

ness and industry is seen as vital. The Institute seeks to work with other regional partners to:

- facilitate new relationships between the university and industry, business, and government authorities;
- facilitate synergies between existing research groups within and outside UWS that have the potential to address significant regional research needs;
- initiate and support shared or complementary research interests in areas that are critical to the region's development;
- facilitate the development of multidisciplinary teams able to address a range of regional research problems and issues; and
- actively support the discussion of key research needs in Western Sydney by promoting university and community forums, conferences, and seminars, and by seeking to fund a range of postgraduate scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, and visiting fellowships.

Stimulating Regional Economic Development

The WSRI is also designed as a major stimulus to regional development. It will do this in a number of important ways by:

- providing knowledge about the industrial and business strengths of the region;
- providing access to economic data that provide potential investors with accurate pictures of the region's workforce, infrastructure, and business strengths; and
- facilitating a range of business initiatives in partnership with other key regional organizations (e.g., GWSEDB) including incubators, technology parks, industry support centers, etc;
- providing opportunities for significant technology transfer from areas of strength within UWS and key industries; and
- attracting key thinkers and industry leaders into the region as part of regional forums, conferences, etc.

The author of this paper commenced in February 1998 as professor of urban and regional gover-

nance and director of the institute. UWS is the lead agency in the Information and Resources Program of the *TeamWest* Regional Agenda.

NSW Government: A New Ministry and Office of Western Sydney³

One of the deterrents to effective central-local relations is the dichotomy between, on the one hand, electing national and state politicians on a geographic basis (i.e., electorates by place) while, on the other hand, managing the affairs of government bureaucratically through functions (e.g., health, education, finance, etc.). The center of power at the state and national level—the cabinet—is made up of ministers responsible for jurisdictional functions, not place. Representation tends to be of communities of interest, not communities of place (e.g., a city or region). The pattern of metropolitan management in Sydney has been production of functional plans and strategies:

- metropolitan planning strategies;
- public transport strategies;
- integrated transport strategies;
- air quality management plans;
- sustainable agriculture strategic plans;
- catchment management plans; and
- Sydney water environmental reports.

These have been prepared traditionally by functional agencies of government. Recently interest in whole-of-government approaches has risen in New South Wales. One major initiative has been the Urban Management Committee of Cabinet. This committee—made up of key members of the cabinet—has a role in guiding future development and management of the metropolitan region to improve the efficient delivery of the Government's urban infrastructure goals. The first "Urban Management Infrastructure Management Plan" was released in March 1998. It provides the community with greater transparency on broad infrastructure strategies and individual program that meet the goals of the government. By making public investment transparent it seeks to influence private investment.

Partly in response to representations from local governments in Greater Western Sydney, in 1997 the

NSW Government allocated a ministerial portfolio to the Honorable Kim Yeadon to be the minister advising the premier of Western Sydney. Minister Yeadon represents a state electorate in Greater Western Sydney. This appointment, the first of its kind in the state, has been welcomed in the region, although the minister does also hold three additional functional portfolios: information technology; forestry; and ports. Of significance to the region, and importantly for this paper, the minister has established an Office of Western Sydney in the region. By choice of the government, this office has been co-located within UWS, in the same building as the Western Sydney Research Institute.

The roles of the Office of Western Sydney are:

- to provide strategic policy advice to the NSW Government on Western Sydney issues;
- to develop a strategic whole-of-government policy framework for the effective and efficient delivery of programs and services in the region;
- liaise with other government agencies to secure a coordinated approach to meeting the needs of the people of Western Sydney; and
- develop and implement whole-of-government and whole-of-region initiatives in Western Sydney.

The Office of Western Sydney has been established and was to be opened by the premier of NSW on July 23, 1998. Already Minister Yeadon is active in the region and in another new initiative. For the first time the State Government's Budget 1998-99 included a Western Sydney budget statement that was released in the region by the state treasurer on June 5, 1998.

Final Comments

This article has sought to contribute to the renewed interest in metropolitan governance. The first steps have been taken in Greater Western Sydney offering prospect of a new approach to whether these three key "actors," in concert, with a whole-of-region, multifaceted perspective, could develop a unique collaborative partnership to regional governance in Greater Western Sydney. It is too early to tell, but in the action research tradition this paper documents

an observation and reflection on recent events. The conclusion is that prospects look promising. It would be possible to watch dispassionately, but with great interest, as events unfold and reflect again on another occasion. But the author is an active participant in the events themselves. Accordingly this has been written equally as a challenge to create a new form of metropolitan governance, providing an introduction of tools and structures that could guide the process. ■

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