

Adelaide: Tough Times in the City of Light

Stephen Hamnett and Jon Kellett

South Australia has a long tradition of purposeful government planning and social reform which is commonly traced back to its establishment as a planned free settlement in 1836 (Hutchings and Bunker, 1986; Hutchings, 2007). Elements of this tradition were still apparent in the early 1990s following a major review of the planning system which emphasized the importance of strategic planning for metropolitan Adelaide (Hamnett, 2000, p. 179). Some components of the planning system introduced at that time survive but it has been weakened by the imperatives of neoliberalism and by the particular pressures arising from South Australia's increasingly challenging economic circumstances which have led to an aggressively pro-development climate in the state in recent years.

Adelaide has the smallest population and the lowest rate of population growth of the mainland state capitals discussed in this book (ABS, 2016a). While there has been some increase in population density in the inner suburbs in the early twenty-first century (Coffee *et al.*, 2016), Adelaide still has one of the lowest overall population densities of the capitals (Government of South Australia, 2016a) and the highest level of car use (ABS, 2013a).

After a short historical prelude, this chapter summarizes the principal economic and demographic trends in Adelaide in the early twenty-first century. Since 2002 South Australia has been governed almost entirely by Labor Governments, led first by Mike Rann and then, from 2011, by Jay Weatherill. The main focus of the chapter is on a chronological analysis of the principal metropolitan plans released in 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2016, interwoven with a discussion of accompanying reforms to planning processes and legislation. Some particular elements are identified which serve to differentiate Adelaide's recent metropolitan policy reforms and regulatory experiments from those of Australia's other major cities. Overall, however, the chapter observes a tendency for South Australian planning to converge with practice elsewhere, with a consequential weakening of the state's once distinctive planning tradition.

Recent Economic and Population Trends

The South Australian economy is more reliant on agriculture and manufacturing than is Australia generally. Because of its small size the state is highly dependent on the health of the national economy, with many factors affecting its growth lying beyond its control (Hampton *et al.*, 2013, p. 11). The mining boom of the early twenty-first century, which carried Australia largely unscathed through the Global Financial Crisis, offered South Australia a brief prospect of prosperity when a massive expansion of the Olympic Dam copper and uranium mine, near Roxby Downs in the north of the state, was proposed in 2008. This was predicted to contribute more than A\$45 billion to Gross State Product over its 40-year life (Minister for Mineral Resources Development/ Minister for Urban Development and Planning, 2011, p. 3), but these expansion plans were shelved in 2012.

A second blow to the South Australian economy has been the demise of the motor industry, a major bulwark of the state's manufacturing sector throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The last remaining manufacturer, General Motors Holden, will cease vehicle production at its Elizabeth plant in the northern suburbs of Adelaide in 2017.

In November 2016 South Australia reported an unemployment level of 7.0 per cent, the highest amongst Australian states (ABS, 2016*b*). A much-needed boost came in 2016 with a major Commonwealth contract to build submarines, but the state government has recognized the urgent need to diversify the economy by supporting the export of high-value agricultural and horticultural products; developing 'knowledge industries'; attracting more international students; and drawing additional tourists to Adelaide's arts and music festivals and to South Australia's internationally renowned wine-producing areas, most of which are fairly accessible from the capital city. As a particular indication that desperate times require desperate measures, serious consideration was given recently to the establishment of dumps to store imported nuclear waste (Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission, 2016, p. xiii).

Between 2000 and 2016 South Australia's total population grew from 1.5 to 1.7 million people (Government of South Australia, 2016*b*). Part of this period saw a higher than average rate of population growth, with implications for planning policy. Metropolitan Adelaide retains a high degree of primacy within the state's settlement system, with nearly 80 per cent of the total resident population. The metropolitan area grew from 1.06 million to 1.225 million people over the period 2001–2016 (ABS, 2006; 2013*b*), with changes to statistical boundaries introduced at the time of the 2011 census accounting for around 123,700 of this. The post-millennium period has seen an increase in the number of migrants of Asian origin settling in the city, although a higher proportion than in other states was still of European descent in 2011 (ABS, 2013*b*).

The City of Adelaide, the central part of the metropolitan area, has grown more quickly in recent years, almost doubling its resident population from fewer than

13,000 in 2001 to 23,000 by 2015. With three major universities having campuses in the central city, international students comprise a significant proportion of this growth, and the population is now dominated by the 15–44 age group. There has been an accompanying change to the skyline. The City of Adelaide has long been distinguished from other mainland capitals by its low-rise city of stone heritage buildings, but tall, bland apartment blocks, predominantly designed to meet minimal space standards, are now changing this character, with higher-quality design limited mainly to new government and, in particular, university buildings.



Figures 5.1a and **5.1b**. Old and new in the City of Adelaide. (Photos: Stephen Hamnett)

Precursor: Adelaide's Planning Tradition

Adelaide was founded in 1836 as part of a deliberate process to establish a new South Australian colony 'as like as possible to a country which is perfectly civilized but not over-peopled' (Mill, 1834). It was laid out according to Colonel William Light's celebrated city plan which later helped to shape the ideas of the international garden city movement. Since its establishment Adelaide has generally grown at a slower rate than other Australian state capitals for reasons to do with its relative isolation and limited economic opportunities. These circumstances have led to a long history of activist and interventionist state governments. The particular conditions of the Great Depression in the 1930s led to the establishment of the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT), a public housing agency which built cheap housing for workers to support the state's industrialization. South Australia's public rental housing stock reached a peak of about 63,000 dwellings in 1992 (Marsden, 2011, p. 262), although it has declined substantially since then in accord with the move nationally away from government ownership of dwellings to a range of other policy instruments to meet housing objectives (Beer and Paris, 2005). In the post-war years the SAHT undertook larger-scale projects which reshaped Adelaide in a way that demonstrated a 'practical and powerful' approach to metropolitan planning (Stretton, 1970, p. 142; see also Howe, 2000). South Australia was also a major beneficiary in the 1970s of the Whitlam Government's

land commission funds for public land acquisition in support of ‘comprehensive and orderly urban development’ (Forster and McCaskill, 2007, p. 99). By the late twentieth century South Australia had a well-entrenched reputation amongst Australian states as a developmental social democracy with a distinctive planning tradition (Badcock, 1986; Hutchings and Bunker, 1986).

Adelaide’s Planning in the 1990s

The main elements of the South Australia planning system in 2000 had been established in the early 1990s, following a major review conducted by the Bannon Labor Government (Planning Review, 1992a). One output of this review was the proposal for a series of new planning strategies for the various regions of the state, commencing with a new metropolitan strategy. This would replace the traditional ‘end-state’ plan, which had shaped Adelaide’s growth since the 1960s, with a more flexible and indicative spatial framework for development. It anticipated a metropolitan population of between 1.23 million and 1.38 million by 2021. It argued that most of the housing to meet this growth could be built on vacant land within the existing metropolitan boundary (Planning Review, 1992b, p. 25), with the government’s land agency, the South Australian Urban Land Trust, expected to play a strong role in joint venture developments between the public and private sectors in both inner and outer areas. Other key elements of the 1992 strategy included a reaffirmation of the importance of a strict hierarchy of centres within a polycentric metropolis; the renewal of Adelaide’s extensive old public housing estates to address issues of social disadvantage; and an acknowledgment of the new imperatives of sustainability. Overall, the review proposed a shift from reactive, short-term thinking to a long-range, citizen-oriented style of planning which would aspire ‘... to place equity considerations back on the metropolitan planning agenda and to resolve tensions between economic investment and environmental planning’ (Lennon, 2000, p. 164).

However, the lofty ambitions of the Bannon Government’s planning review soon proved to be out of step with a strengthening trend towards greater reliance on market outcomes (Lennon 2000, p.165). Labor lost office in 1993 and metropolitan strategy became the responsibility of a Liberal Government which showed little enthusiasm for the strategy that it had inherited. The period from 1993 to 2002 was one of ‘broad ideology and ad hoc projects’ (Bunker and Hutchings, 1996, p. 48).

The Liberals revised the metropolitan planning strategy in 1998 and this was the plan in force in 2000 (Premier of South Australia, 1998). Its emphasis was squarely on supporting the government’s economic imperatives, primarily by ensuring the availability of serviced land and by building roads. There had been no substantial new investments in public transport infrastructure in South Australia since the mid-1980s and, over the period 1986–1999, the mode share of public transport plunged by 32 per cent (Transport SA, 2002, p. 2). The 1998 strategy did

express support, however, for development ‘at higher densities around centres of activity and along major transport routes’ (Premier of South Australia, 1998, p. 66) and, over time, it foresaw a shift towards ‘a multi-centred city’ (Premier of South Australia, 1998, p. 67). Given their pro-market tendencies, a surprising proposal by the Liberals the following year was for an urban growth boundary for Adelaide, eventually introduced in 2002 (DTUPA, 2002).

Strategic Planning under the Rann Labor Government 2002–2011: ‘Prosperity Through People’

Metropolitan Planning 2003–2007

A Labor government led by Mike Rann took office in 2002 and Labor have remained in power in South Australia ever since (see table 5.1 overleaf).

The Rann Government oversaw substantial changes to metropolitan planning strategy and to the state planning system more generally. An updated metropolitan planning strategy was adopted in January 2003 (Premier of South Australia, 2003) which restated earlier commitments to urban consolidation, retaining the growth boundary, the use of surplus government land for development and a strong centres policy (see figure 5.2). But, even while adopting the 2003 strategy, the government indicated that this was just a set of ‘discrete amendments’ (Government of South Australia, 2005, p. 2) pending a more comprehensive review.

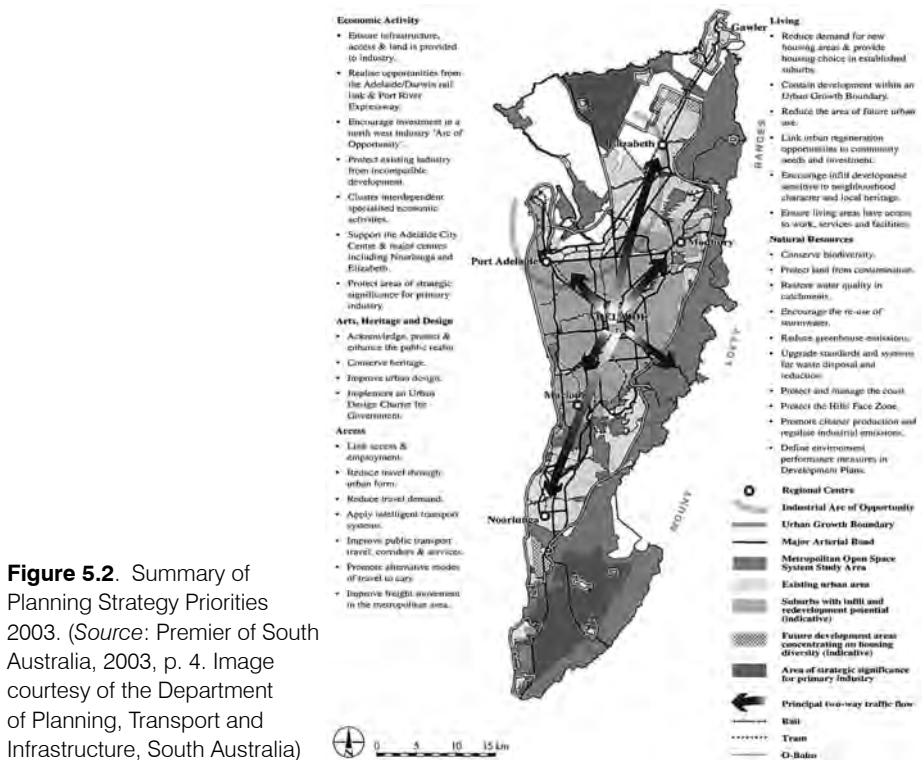


Figure 5.2. Summary of Planning Strategy Priorities 2003. (Source: Premier of South Australia, 2003, p. 4. Image courtesy of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, South Australia)

Table 5.1. Governments, plans and planning reforms 2000–2016. (Source: The authors)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Legislation and Principal Planning Agencies</i>	<i>Plans and Strategies</i>	<i>Planning Reform</i>
2001	Liberal (in power since 1993) Premier Olsen, then Kerin	Department of Transport, Urban Planning and the Arts		Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) introduced
2002	Labor elected Premier Rann	Department of Transport and Urban Planning		Economic Development Board established
2003			Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide	
2004			State Strategic Plan	
2005		Planning SA (Department of Primary Industry and Resources)	Strategic Infrastructure Plan	
2006	Labor re-elected Premier Rann	Development (Panels) Amendment Act, 2006	Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide	DAP powers amended to ensure a minority of elected members
2007		Climate Change & Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act, 2007	Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide Tackling Climate Change: South Australia's Greenhouse Strategy, 2007–2020	
2008		Department of Planning and Local Government		Planning and Development Review
2009				
2010	Labor re-elected Premier Rann		30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide	
2011	Rann replaced as Premier by Weatherill	Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure		
2012				
2013				
2014	Labor re-elected Premier Weatherill			Expert Panel on Planning Reform 2013–2014
2015			Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan South Australia's Climate Change Strategy 2015–2050	
2016		Planning, Development & Infrastructure Act 2016	30 Year Plan Update	

Soon after coming to office, Rann established a new Economic Development Board (EDB) and this recommended establishing a high-level, visionary State Strategic Plan (EDB, 2003, p. 26). Early in 2004 the state government published a population policy entitled 'Prosperity through People' (Government of South Australia, 2004a). Its ambitious target of 2 million people for South Australia by the middle of the twenty-first century was central to the first State Strategic Plan, released in May 2004 (Government of South Australia, 2004b) and also informed the continuing task of revising the metropolitan planning strategy. But the latter also placed a much greater emphasis than previously on ecologically sustainable development as a foundation of planning and 'not just another issue which needs ticking off on a checklist' (Bellette, 2003, p.12). Unusually, the planning team was led by an environmental scientist and the resulting draft strategy was particularly rich in its analysis of water, waste, energy and biodiversity, and in its understanding of the links between these elements and urban development.

The draft metropolitan planning strategy was released for public comment in April 2005. 'Integration' was a key aspiration, with three strategic planning priorities expressed as 'integrated energy provision, transport planning and land use planning'; 'integrated land and water use planning and development'; and 'urban containment' (Government of South Australia, 2005, pp. 10–12). Growth was to be contained within an urban boundary although it was acknowledged that 'broad hectare' land would be exhausted within 12 to 15 years at current rates of development. If urban sprawl was to be contained, therefore, it would be necessary to achieve higher urban densities through 'transit-focused development'. When finalized in August 2006 (Government of South Australia, 2006), however, the strategy included a modest target of only 10 per cent of weekday travel by public transport by 2018 and no substantial public transport investments were proposed.

The 2006 Planning Strategy was a well-crafted document, in the general style of earlier post-1990 South Australian strategies. It included an indicative 'Metropolitan Spatial Framework' for the next 30 years (figure 5.3) which was to provide a flexible long-term context for the more detailed planning of land release in the shorter-term. The latter was outlined in the government's Residential Metropolitan Development Program, a well-established programme for monitoring trends in land supply and allocating land for suburban expansion over the coming 8–10 years. This seemed to strike an appropriate balance between longer-term flexibility and shorter-term specificity, although the Planning Institute of Australia found the 'spatial framework' to be too abstract, lacking as it did specific indications of priority areas for urban redevelopment or targets for population and jobs (PIA, 2005).

Over the period 2005–2007, much effort went into the preparation of South Australia's Greenhouse Strategy, published in 2007 as 'Tackling Climate Change'. A key underlying assumption was that more compact settlements could encourage shorter journeys and thus reduce harmful emissions (Government of South Australia, 2007b, p. 36). This was one of several important state government



Figure 5.3. Adelaide Metropolitan Spatial Framework 2006. (Source: Government of South Australia, 2006, p. 26. Image courtesy of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, South Australia)

policy documents published between 2004 and 2007. Another was the ‘Strategic Infrastructure Plan for South Australia’, released in 2005 (Office for Infrastructure Development, 2005, p. 6). This incorporated matters traditionally associated with land-use and spatial planning, including increased housing densities in strategic locations well served by public transport. Proposed improvements to transport infrastructure within the metropolitan area continued to give priority to road construction, however.

The metropolitan planning strategy came to sit rather uneasily alongside these other strategic statements. Rather than guiding the provision and staging of infrastructure, it now had the somewhat lesser role of expressing the spatial consequences of infrastructure decisions already taken elsewhere. The marginalization of spatial planning was further symbolized at this time by the relocation of the state government planning function from a Department of

Transport and Urban Planning to become a relatively minor part of the large Primary Industries and Resources portfolio (Bunker, 2015, p. 383).

Consultation on the draft metropolitan planning strategy in 2005 was more limited than previously (O’Leary, 2005) and legislative changes around this time also contributed to a loss of local democratic input into planning decisions. In 2001 the state Liberal Government had established ‘Development Assessment Panels’ to replace elected councils as the planning authorities for local government areas. Amendments in 2006 specified that, henceforth, these were to have a majority of independent expert members. Development assessment panels of various types have subsequently been established in other states, sometimes as a response to concerns about corrupt practices on the part of local councils. Corruption does not seem to have been a significant factor in South Australia, however. The impetus came, rather, from a desire to reduce the capacity for local councils to delay developments by taking frivolous or parochial decisions. There are nineteen local councils responsible for parts of the Adelaide metropolitan area, ranging in population size from nearly 170,000 to less than 10,000. Local government reform to reduce the number of councils is regularly canvassed ‘to allow metro Adelaide to operate as a city rather than as a series of parishes’ (Landry, 2004, p. 30; see also Property Council, 2016) but successive state governments have shown little enthusiasm for this, primarily because of its likely electoral unpopularity.

The Rann Government maintained a strong commitment to ecologically sustainable development while simultaneously pursuing the economic growth priorities of the State Strategic Plan. The integration of these conflicting strategic purposes was and remains an elusive goal. Nevertheless, Rann can claim some impressive achievements in the pursuit of sustainability. These included laying the basis for obtaining around 40 per cent of South Australia’s electricity from renewable sources – especially wind farms – by 2014; construction of a desalination plant powered by renewable energy; encouraging the highest national adoption rates for both domestic rain water tanks and solar photovoltaic panels; providing recycled water to several suburbs; ensuring that office developments meet high energy efficiency standards; and pioneering energy efficient housing.

However, the compact city, a central plank of ‘Tackling Climate Change’ and also of the 2006 Planning Strategy, soon came under strong pressure from the land development industry, which was increasingly critical of the limited amount of land identified for residential development at and beyond the metropolitan fringe, especially in the face of stronger than anticipated population growth. Pressure to release more land also became increasingly linked to the growing political salience of housing affordability and land supply concerns in the lead up to the 2007 Federal election.

In response, less than a year after adopting the 2006 planning strategy, the state government announced that it was extending Adelaide’s urban boundary to include an additional 2,000 hectares of land (Hansard, 2007) and the metropolitan planning strategy was updated to incorporate this in December 2007.

The Planning and Development Review 2008: Planning as ‘Sustainable Economic Enabler’

The dominant characteristic of the period between the adoption of the 2006 metropolitan strategy and the next significant plan, the 30-Year Plan of 2010, was the growing ascendancy of the property development industry as a major influence on government planning policy. A ‘Planning and Development Review’ was announced in June 2007 and this was overseen by a steering group with strong industry links.

Despite the Global Financial Crisis, the economic prospects for South Australia still appeared promising in 2008. In addition to the projected expansion of the Olympic Dam mine, the state had some significant defence contracts, and population growth was being driven by increased levels of net overseas migration (Hugo, 2008). To accommodate anticipated growth, therefore, the Review advocated yet another expansion of the urban boundary, noting that the boundary ‘must be seen as a dynamic management tool, not a fixed line on a map’ (Planning and Development Review Steering Committee, 2008, p. 80). It also recommended a reinvigorated metropolitan planning strategy to assist in restoring the planning system ‘to its intended role of a sustainable economic enabler’ (2008, p. 54) and it proposed a new 30-Year Plan for ‘Greater Adelaide’, an expanded metropolitan region encompassing about 85 per cent of South Australia’s population. The Review also acknowledged the government’s climate change agenda and proposed substantial increases in residential densities at locations served by transit. These policies were to be driven by ‘a reinvigorated and separate state planning department’ (*Ibid.*, p. 52) although, given the composition of the review team, it was unsurprising that it sought a reduced role for the government’s land development agency, by now known as the Land Management Corporation (*Ibid.*, p. 148). A further proposal was for a new residential code to speed up the approval of housing developments.

On 10 June 2008, the government announced its acceptance of most of the Review’s proposals. The 2008–2009 State Budget also proposed significant investment in the metropolitan rail system, the electrification of suburban lines to support transit-oriented development and the staged extension of Adelaide’s only tram line to Port Adelaide.

As part of the preparation of the new 30-Year Plan, additional priority areas for housing beyond the urban fringe were to be identified. Private consultants were quickly commissioned to prepare a Growth Investigation Areas (GIA) report on the grounds that ‘Planning SA was short staffed and would not be able to deliver the GIA report within the tight time frame required’ (Ombudsman SA, 2013, p. 19; see also Bunker, 2015, p. 386).

The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide 2010

A draft of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide was released for public comment in July 2009 (DPLG, 2009a) and finalized, with relatively few changes, in February

2010 (DPLG, 2010). It combined a very generous amount of residential land for urban expansion with heroic aspirations for urban infill in a more compact city. There was an obvious conflict between these two principal strategic thrusts of the plan.

The 30-Year Plan noted that population was growing more rapidly than had been forecast in 2004 and that the date for achieving a state population target of 2 million had now been brought forward from 2050 to 2027 (DPLG, 2009*b*, p. 16). This was translated into an additional 560,000 people for Greater Adelaide by 2036, requiring an additional 258,000 dwellings and 282,000 jobs.

The overall planned growth of Greater Adelaide was disaggregated into a series of detailed housing and employment targets across eight regions. The greater part of new fringe growth was directed to the northern region and to an expanded Barossa region. Large new development areas were identified at Mount Barker, Roseworthy and, controversially, at Buckland Park, a fairly remote tract of flood-prone land north-west of the metropolitan area, where a ‘country township’ had been proposed by a large private development company (Hamnett and Hutchings, 2009; Hutchings and Kellett, 2013).

Within the existing metropolitan area, locations for fourteen new transit-oriented development sites (TODs) were identified. Over the life of the Plan it was intended that 70 per cent of all new housing would be built within the existing urban area, with 50 per cent of the region’s growth concentrated in transit corridors (see figure 5.4) where densities were projected to increase ‘on average from 15 to 25–35 dwellings per hectare’ (DPLG, 2009*a*, p. 74).

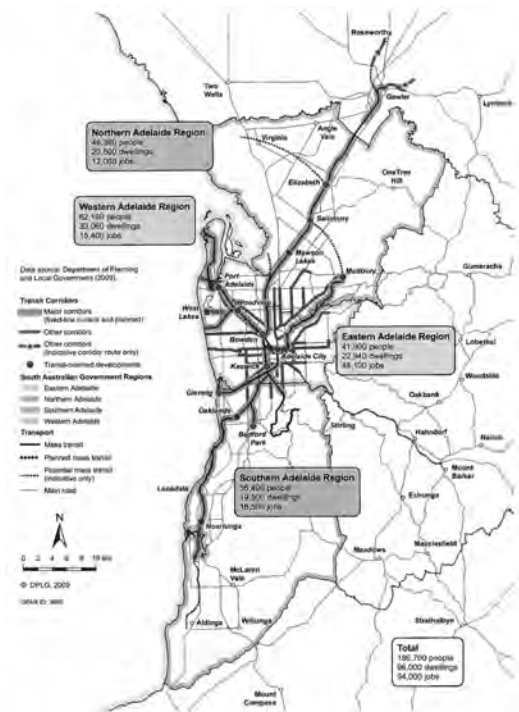


Figure 5.4. The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide 2010. Map D2 Targets for Transit Corridors. (Source: DPLG, 2010, p.75. Image courtesy of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, South Australia)

The population projections adopted for the 30-Year Plan were higher than the highest contemporary forecasts of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see Hutchings and Kellett, 2013). The Planning Minister suggested that ‘if you over-achieve or underachieve on these targets ... all it will do is simply adjust the timing of the plan’ (Hansard, 2010, p. 1554). The Planning Institute pointed out, however, that it might be difficult to achieve the increased level of infill housing sought in the short to medium term and that this would lead to greenfield development being prioritized, with associated increases in car use (PIA, 2009). Since 2004–2005, public transport’s share of weekday vehicle kilometres travelled in metropolitan Adelaide had remained consistently low at only 7.5 per cent (South Australia’s Strategic Plan Audit Committee, 2012, p.111). A comparative analysis of census data on travel to work patterns in Australia’s capital cities was published in 2012 (Mees and Groenhart, 2012) and noted that Adelaide had the highest mode share for car driving of any of the capital cities, the third-lowest rate of public transport use (after Canberra and Hobart) and the second-lowest rate of active transport use (after Perth). The early provision of a high quality public transport system seemed essential if Adelaide was to achieve a substantial shift from greenfield development to higher density infill over time and to lose its label as ‘Australia’s car capital’ (Mees and Groenhart, 2012, p. ii).

The Weatherill Government: Towards a More ‘Vibrant’ Adelaide

In October 2011 Rann was replaced as Labor Premier by Jay Weatherill and this led to some further changes in emphasis in metropolitan planning policy. The focus shifted from transit-oriented development across a multi-centred city towards accelerated redevelopment at substantially greater densities and heights in central Adelaide and along inner arterial roads. As an indication of the state government’s shift in focus, the Land Management Corporation became the ‘Urban Renewal Authority’ in 2012. ‘Vibrancy’ in the inner city became a rhetorical centrepiece of planning policy under Weatherill and, in pursuit of this, substantial investment went into the redevelopment of key sites in the city centre, including the Riverbank area, adjacent to an upgraded Adelaide Oval. Regulatory reforms were also made to encourage the growth of small bars in the city, linked to the revitalization of ‘laneways’ (explicitly drawing on the experience of central Melbourne). As noted earlier, the resident population of the City of Adelaide more than doubled between 2001 and 2015 and changes to planning policy in 2012 sought to encourage further growth by allowing dramatic increases in permitted height limits in the central area.

Also in 2012, however, it was conceded that a population of 2 million for the state was now unlikely to be achieved by 2027 (South Australia’s Strategic Plan Audit Committee, 2012, p. 95). The target of 258,000 dwellings set in the 30-Year Plan required an average annual net growth of 8,600 dwellings, whereas the average from 2006 to 2011 was 8,000 a year and this dipped in 2012–2013 to just under



Figure 5.5. Vibrant Adelaide – street art in Stafford Street. (Photo: Stephen Hamnett)

6,000 (DPTI, 2013*b*, p. 24). The upgrading of the rail network was also proceeding more slowly than planned. The electrification and extension of Adelaide's southern suburban rail line was completed in 2014, but plans to electrify the main northern and north-western lines were postponed in the 2012–2013 budget, as was the extension of the tram network in the face of what the State Treasurer described as 'a record revenue write-down' (Government of South Australia, 2012).

The electrification of suburban rail lines is likely to be completed eventually. In 2013, however, the state government released a draft 'Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan' (ITLUP) which refocused priority for new tramlines on routes within the CBD and extending into nearby inner suburbs (Minister for Planning and Minister for Transport, 2013, p. 4).



Figures 5.6a and 5.6b. (a) Adelaide's 'coast to coast' tram (currently stalled at Hindmarsh); (b) New electric train on the Adelaide-Seaford line. (Photos: Stephen Hamnett)

Meanwhile, the development industry continued to lobby for the further streamlining of the planning system. In response, and also in the broader context of growing support for planning reform at national level (Productivity Commission, 2011; COAG, 2012), another review of the South Australian planning system was conducted (Expert Panel on Planning Reform, 2014; Hamnett and Kellett, 2016). This drew heavily on recent reforms in other Australian states. It led to a new Act of Parliament in April 2016 (Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, 2016) which made provision for the establishment of a new State Planning Commission, drawing in part on the experience of the Western Australian Planning Commission and bringing together existing state policy and assessment bodies. The centrepiece of the new Act was a proposed Planning and Design Code, intended to increase the number of development types for which no approval was required and to allow for faster assessment of development proposals against a checklist of standardized built-form criteria. A statutory requirement was introduced that there should be a strengthened urban growth boundary to protect what were called ‘Environment and Food Production Areas’ from urban encroachment. The Act also foreshadowed a ‘Community Engagement Charter’, although this sat uncomfortably alongside further radical proposals for substantial reductions to the rights of third parties to appeal against planning decisions and for the almost complete removal of elected local councillors from development assessment panels. In effect, the latter meant that local government would lose its already diminished role in the assessment of all but the most minor development applications, a very significant shift in the planning responsibilities of state and local governments.

The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide 2016 Update

A final version of the ITLUP was released in 2015. This indicated that spatial planning strategy was now expressed in three separate plans which needed to be read together: the planning strategy; the strategic infrastructure plan; and the ITLUP (Minister for Planning and Minister for Transport, 2015, p. 19).

In the same year significant changes were made which weakened the long-established policy of reinforcing a hierarchy of centres within the metropolitan area, on the basis that ‘excessive oversight’ of the location of retail activities might discourage investment (DPTI, 2015). These were subsumed into a more comprehensive update to the 30-Year Plan (figure 5.7) released for public comment in August 2016 (Government of South Australia, 2016a).

The 30-Year Plan Update is an accessible document, with some similarities in style to the indicative planning strategies produced for Adelaide between 1993 and 2006. It is replete with cartoon-like visual cues to emphasize its main principles and its mantra of vibrancy. The 2010 Plan was a much more detailed plan with eighty-nine targets which have been simplified in the Update to six ‘strategic high level targets’ (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 28), thereby attracting the ire of the land development industry as being ‘too generic’ (UDIA, 2016, p. 2).



Figure 5.7. The 30-Year Plan Update 2016 – Cover Image. (Source: Government of South Australia, 2016b. Image courtesy of the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, South Australia)

The six new targets for 2045 were all expressed quantitatively:

1. 85 per cent of all new housing to be built in established urban areas;
2. 60 per cent of all new housing to be built within close proximity to quality public transport (rail, tram, O-Bahn – a guided busway built in the 1980s – and bus);
3. 25 per cent increase in the share of work trips made by active transport modes;
4. 25 per cent increase in the percentage of residents living in walkable neighbourhoods (this ‘walkability’ target applies only in the inner and middle suburbs);
5. 20 per cent increase in tree canopy cover;
6. 25 per cent increase in housing diversity to meet changing household needs.

Adelaide's population growth rate has slowed, with an additional 545,000 people now predicted for Greater Adelaide by 2045. The urban form proposals in the Update anticipate further increases in the overall proportion of new housing to be built within the existing urban area (85 per cent by 2045), more high-rise apartments in the CBD and developments of four to six storeys in the inner and middle suburbs along 'transport boulevards'. Between 2010 and 2014, 75 per cent of dwellings built in metropolitan Adelaide were still detached dwellings, but the Update seeks a more diverse and affordable housing stock. Since 2005 South Australian governments have pursued a target of achieving a minimum of 15 per cent of affordable housing in all significant new developments with some success, although the relative affordability of housing in Adelaide at present is more to do with the overheated housing markets of other, faster-growing cities than with the innovative public housing policies of recent South Australian governments. Affordability and economic competitiveness are linked in the Update (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 59), as they were in the 2008 Planning and Development Review (and, indeed, as they have been in South Australia since the 1930s).

The 2010 Plan assumed that an average of 400 hectares of fringe land would be consumed annually, but this has now been shown to have been a substantial over-estimate (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 19). With regard to the 2010 Plan's dwelling infill target, the Update asserts that this has already been met – 70 per cent of new housing growth in 2014 was in established urban areas as a result of a combination of factors. About a third of annual growth in housing stock between 2004 and 2014 came from small-scale subdivision, following reductions in minimum allowable allotment sizes (DPTI, 2013b, p. 1; Giannakodakis, 2013). Renewal of older public housing areas was also significant and around a third of all annual growth in new housing development was on brownfield land (DPTI, 2013b, p. 18).

The Update maintains the link with the government's updated climate change strategy (Government of South Australia, 2015) and reasserts the contribution that a more compact city can make to the current target of net zero emissions by 2050. Denser inner and middle suburbs will be 'healthy neighbourhoods that promote cycling, walking and public life' (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 67), although the Update is realistic about the challenge of creating 'walkable neighbourhoods', given that metropolitan Adelaide's population density, with fewer than 1,400 people per square kilometre on average, remains amongst the lowest of large Australian cities (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 21).

In sharp contrast to the 2010 plan, there are no targets in the Update which relate to employment. Economic policy is now primarily about removing barriers to business growth and accelerating approval processes (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 22). Jobs in the 'knowledge economy' are said to agglomerate in the city and to a lesser extent in other employment centres. The priority, therefore, is to 'locate more housing in close proximity to the city and activity centres and

better utilize public transport connections to link people with jobs' (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 71).

There is very little in the Update about planning policy for the outer suburbs. A brief 'case study' of the separate Northern Economic Plan is included (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 76) and there is a similarly brief reference to how parts of the northern suburbs are being redeveloped (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 65). The overall presumption appears, however, to be that a shift to a denser urban form will in time provide better access to jobs, reduce the potential for social isolation in low-density outer suburbs and build social capital through interaction (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 128).

There has been a good deal of scholarly analysis in recent years which has shown that life in the outer suburbs of Australian cities is not simply determined by urban form but by access to jobs, education, health and services (see for example, Forster, 2006; Fagan and O'Neill, 2015; Dodson, 2016). There is also some excellent Australian research on how public transport can be provided more effectively in low-density suburbs (Mees, 2010), recognizing that trends in the distribution of jobs and services have led to more complex travel patterns than can be easily represented in a neat model of centre-based activities. Indeed, the recent weakening of retail policy in metropolitan Adelaide seems to acknowledge the practical difficulties of intensifying economic development in existing centres. The Update does not contain much rigorous analysis to support its assumption that most future jobs will readily concentrate in a few highly accessible centres in a city which, for the most part, will remain low density and car-dominated for years to come. Some optimism is expressed about the potential of 'driverless cars' to contribute to a more compact urban form (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 14), but, once again, there is no detailed analysis or explanation in the Update of what this might mean. Recent experiences also suggest a need for caution about the capacity of public transport investment, and the other 'active transport' measures in the 30-Year Plan Update, to reduce car dependency in the short to medium term and to keep pace with increases in population and density. Investment in new cycling infrastructure is regularly contested by the influential motoring lobby in Australia's car capital (see Waldhuter, 2017), while public transport investments remain highly sensitive to changing budgetary circumstances and to ideological fashions under Australia's turbulent federal political system.

Overall, the 30-Year Plan Update seems to rest on an unambiguous acceptance of the notion that increases to urban densities are an essential condition for shaping preferred environmental, social and economic outcomes in Greater Adelaide. The greatest capacity for increasing densities is seen in the 'vibrant and attractive' central and inner areas of the city (Government of South Australia, 2016a, p. 2) and in transit corridors elsewhere. The main focus of policy in the Update is overwhelmingly on these areas.

Conclusion

The compact city has been a key building block of twenty-first century planning and environmental strategies for metropolitan Adelaide. The metropolitan plans of 2003 and 2006 sought to encourage this through strict limits on the amount of land released at the urban fringe. The 2010 Plan, however, while continuing to advocate a compact city, expanded the urban growth boundary substantially and also rezoned large tracts of land for housing around far-flung townships with no public transport links to Adelaide. Nevertheless, infill development since 2010 has occurred at a much higher rate than forecast, with the consequence that appreciably more greenfield land has been designated than will be required in the foreseeable future. This has made it easier for the most recent set of planning reforms to take a tougher line on urban expansion by designating protected Environment and Food Production areas, the boundaries of which can only be changed with parliamentary approval.

Within these strengthened urban boundaries, the recently released 30-Year Plan Update seeks even higher levels of infill in the future and foreshadows ambitious attempts to increase housing densities in 'walkable' inner and middle suburbs. There is a lack of detail in the Update about how higher levels of infill are to be achieved, however. Recent changes to zoning have been effective in unleashing a substantial boom in apartment buildings in the CBD as well as encouraging the redevelopment of older, larger housing blocks in the inner and middle suburbs. But zoning is a blunt instrument and there is considerable scope for an enhanced and more nuanced role for government in facilitating land assembly in infill areas. The evidence to date suggests that the cost to government of infrastructure for new housing development on infill sites is significantly less than on greenfield sites (Giannakodakis, 2013; Hamilton and Kellett, 2017), although this is not necessarily the case for private developers, nor for every infill location as infrastructure capacity is a key issue. The Urban Development Institute of Australia has criticized the 30-Year Plan Update for assuming too readily the adequacy of existing infrastructure to cope with higher levels of infill (UDIA, 2016, p. 3). Significantly, most large infill sites have now been developed and a major challenge for the Urban Renewal Authority will be to facilitate the assembly of land for medium-density development within existing suburbs where ownership is more fragmented.

What seems to be lacking in the most recent 30-Year Plan Update, as compared to its predecessors, is an overall vision for the future of the entire metropolitan area and its hinterland. The preferred model of dense, vibrant urban neighbourhoods teeming with knowledge workers and international students who cycle to work or ride around on trams and hang out in small laneway bars is a model primarily for the inner suburbs. It tends to gloss over the considerable challenges of transforming a very low-density, car-dominated city to its preferred new urban form. In the 1970s the great South Australian urban reformer, Hugh Stretton, set out his vision for the future growth of Adelaide based around strong suburban centres capable

of providing the community life and services required in the expanding suburbs and of acting as counter-magnets to excessive concentration in the Adelaide City Centre (Stretton, 1970, p. 356). This notion of a multi-centred city was endorsed in the 1992 metropolitan strategy and remained as a constant in subsequent plans, underpinned by a strictly enforced hierarchy of metropolitan centres. The latest 30-Year Update, however, in simplifying metropolitan strategy down to a handful of selective targets biased towards the CBD and inner suburbs, seems to ignore our growing understanding of the complexity and diversity of Australian suburbs and, in particular, the fine-grained patterns of disadvantage found in the outer areas of Adelaide where most people still live.

A profile of Adelaide published in the journal *Cities* in 1985 noted a number of chronic issues impacting the state capital of South Australia at that time (Bunker, 1985). These included slow population growth, an ageing population, a high level of car dependency, a recession-hit manufacturing sector, an unemployment rate higher than the national average and growing inequality. In terms of the city's economic vulnerability, it might appear that not a lot has changed since then. As this chapter has shown, however, there have been some significant shifts over this period in the approach to planning espoused by state governments. South Australia's long tradition of public enterprise and active government involvement in the acquisition and servicing of land for urban development and in the provision of public housing was still important in the 1990s and underpinned the joint public-private development of new large, well-planned suburbs north and south of a multi-centred city, endorsed by the Bannon Government's planning review. Little of that approach now survives and Bunker and Hutchings (1996, p. 56) have described the Bannon review as 'the last gasp of the visionary tradition'.

The more recent history of planning in South Australia has seen a gradual convergence with the experience of other states. In concert with neoliberal reform agendas, Commonwealth encouragement to harmonize state planning systems, the influence of the development industry, and the hollowing-out of state planning agencies, there has been a continuing quest for simpler, standardized approval processes.

However, neoliberalism in South Australia has not led simply to a 'rolling back' of the state government's involvement in all aspects of planning. The Rann Government's early rhetoric had elements redolent of the 'Third Way' notions that gained currency in the UK in the 1990s (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2013, p. 12). The state government was committed to being highly interventionist in support of its economic goals and also, on occasion, its social and environmental priorities. The Weatherill Government's planning reforms have maintained and, in some respects, strengthened this interventionist approach. Where interventionist planning in South Australia was once supportive of public housing, metropolitan centres and land development in the community interest, it now seems to be directed primarily towards reducing the role of local government in planning, concentrating power in the hands of the state government and using that power

to weaken planning policies and controls so as to facilitate private development. There is an apparent belief that almost *any* investment – even in nuclear waste dumps – is desirable in the current, very challenging economic climate. While the state’s economic prospects seemed brighter for a while in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the structural shifts since then have reinforced the fundamental weakness and high vulnerability of the South Australian economy. A consequence has been that there have been few challenges to the political discourse that perceived that regulatory obstacles to development need to be removed and objections to recent radical planning reforms have been surprisingly muted in a state once known as the ‘Paradise of Dissent’ (Pike, 1957).

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