
Research Paper

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE PLANNING OF TRANS-BORDER CITY REGIONS

three Australian case studies

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Abstract

Polycentric city regions are expanding worldwide, often spanning national borders. Using literature review and document research, comparative case studies of regional planning of Australia's emerging internal trans-border city regions are presented. The paper examines fifty years of trans-border planning efforts at three urbanizing borders of the Australian state of New South Wales, demonstrating different levels of commitment and success, partly depending on the proximity (or remoteness) of each trans-border city region to the capital cities in each state or territory. Evidence is provided that effective trans-border planning of city regions depends on overcoming differing levels of commitment to trans-border planning by the state jurisdictions involved.

Keywords

Trans-border, cross-border, city-region, regional planning

1. City regions

1.1. The rise of city regions

With the rise of "global city regions" since the late twentieth century (Simmonds and Hack 2000; Scott et al. 2014), there has been increasing acknowledgment that new models are replacing the twentieth century urban conception of a metropolis. The phenomenon of the polycentric city region has superseded the old idea of suburbs radiating out around a single city centre or 'CBD' (Garreau 1991; Calthorpe and Fulton 2013). Suburbs are becoming urbanized within these new city regions and 'placeless' suburbs are beginning to be transformed through the creation of denser, mixed use suburban centres connected by efficient public transport (Al-Kodmany 2016; Beske and Dixon 2018).

These polycentric city regions are increasingly spreading across state and national borders. Such trans-border city regions have been noted around the world, including in Europe, Asia and the Americas/ North America. Well known examples include:

- the expansion of Shenzhen (and other Pearl River Delta cities) and neighbouring separately-administered Hong Kong;
- Aachen-Maastricht-Liege (Germany, Netherlands and France);
- San Diego (US) – Tijuana (Mexico); and

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- the 'BonNYWash' crescent embracing Boston, New York and Washington across several north-eastern states in the USA.

In addition to trans-border city regions such as these, there are increasing examples of cross-border collaboration in economic development corridors such as the Dublin-Belfast corridor (linking Ireland and Northern Ireland), the Oresund corridor between Copenhagen (Denmark) and Malmo (Sweden) and the link across the Causeway between Singapore and Johor, Malaysia. Such corridors typically involve a focus on improving transport connections and partnerships to improve the combined international competitiveness and economic well-being of formerly discrete cities and towns.

This paper examines the uneven progress of policy for regional planning of Australia's emerging internal trans-border city regions since the 1970s. Three contrasting case studies are presented, focusing on regional plans in three trans-border city regions. As an exploratory research paper, the case study methods used are a combination of literature review, document research and policy analysis of city-regional plans. Comparisons are made with selected international trans-border city regions.

The Australian case studies illustrate that development of effective trans-border city regions, even within one country, depends on overcoming differing levels of commitment to trans-border planning by the state or territory jurisdictions involved. This commitment may also be shaped by the different balance between resources (eg infrastructure, jobs) and population within a city region that spans across state or national borders. Proximity to a major city, particularly a state capital city, seems to be another factor influencing state government commitment.

2. Three Australian case studies of trans-border city region planning

2.1. The rise and fall and rise of trans-border city region planning 1967-2019

This paper presents the only three case studies of trans-border city region planning that have occurred in Australia to date. As an island continent, Australia has no international trans-border city regions, so the three case studies occur across internal borders of states and territories. All three are at the borders of the most populous state, New South Wales (NSW), with the neighbouring states of Victoria and Queensland, and with the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) around the national capital, Canberra. The differences in approach are at first surprising, however these differences reflect different priorities during different decades, as well as different forms of urbanisation across borders in the three cases.

Despite internal state and territory borders being the sites of expanding trans-border city regions, there has been limited recognition of the need for – or progress towards – more integrated planning of these city regions in Australia (O'Hare 2011). The most impressive progress has been led jointly by the ACT and NSW governments, where the trans-border planning and significance of the national capital, Canberra, has been recognised and increased since the 1990s through effective translation of new spatial planning concepts – the Sydney-Canberra Corridor and the 'Capital Region' – into cross-border plans and strategies with overt support by the two governments and surrounding local governments.

The support of the ACT Planning Authority for a cross-border approach has been motivated by the relatively tight physical boundaries of the Territory within which Canberra is located. Canberra's population of just over 400,000 is contained within a constrained spatial Territory of 2,358 square kilometres, but the city services a large trans-border region by providing jobs, health, education, cultural institutions, higher order retailing and other services. Suburban development now transcends the Capital Territory border into the surrounding rural shires within NSW, and many Canberra workers commute from surrounding large and small towns and rural areas that offer affordable housing within attractive settings.

NSW has arguably been an Australian leader in trans-border city region planning as three of its four state/territory borders are sites of expanding city regions:

- Canberra and the ACT is surrounded by and socioeconomically and physically intertwined with the surrounding region across the Territory border.
- One of the fastest-growing regions in Australia, South-East Queensland (SEQ) is beginning to merge with the expanding NSW Far North Coast region, just over 100 kilometres from Brisbane, the capital city of the adjoining state of Queensland.
- The twin regional border cities of Albury (NSW) and Wodonga (Victoria) have experienced fluctuating levels of collaborative planning efforts since the early 1970s.

While the ACT and NSW have led Australian efforts towards collaborative trans-border planning of city regions, the other two states, Victoria and Queensland have been less consistent in progress towards that aim.

The order in which the three Australian trans-border planning case studies are presented in this paper requires a brief explanation. Albury-Wodonga is presented first to provide a long term perspective – fifty years – on trans-border planning in Australia. It is a case that initially involved the most creative governance arrangements and promised the most, but has not been consistently followed through due to political and other issues. The case study concludes by exploring an encouraging contemporary resurgence in interest that appears to have been led from the local government level over recent years and supported by initiatives from both states and the federal government more recently.

Following the Albury-Wodonga case, the paper explores the development and transformation of Canberra's trans-border regional planning over the past thirty years. The final case study section of the paper investigates uneven moves towards regional planning linking SEQ and Far North Coast NSW as a trans-border city region. The final case study is the most populous and rapidly growing of the three.

2.2. Albury Wodonga: the first trans-border planning experiment, 1960s to the present

"What began as an ambitious dream [in 1967] became a more modest experiment, which was changed into a regional development exercise as it was dismantled slowly [between 1989 and 2007]" (Pennay 2005:xi).

Albury-Wodonga is a trans-border city region approximately 300 kilometres from Melbourne and 550 kilometres from Sydney. Two towns established here on each side of a major river crossing on the inland route between the two state capitals in the nineteenth century. This crossing point also intersected with the furthest reach of the riverboat traffic that operated along the Murray River during that century. Both were originally agricultural service towns

for the adjoining rich agricultural regions in the Murray valley. Albury's growth and importance were enhanced as the interchange point for passengers on the interstate rail service between Sydney and Melbourne from 1881 until the standard gauge rail service was established in 1962. The two towns grew into cities in the twentieth century as significant marketing centres and manufacturing places for rural products such as wool and after World War 2, other manufacturing. Their roles also expanded as major regional centres for State Government departments, major regional hospitals, education and other services.

Integrated trans-border planning for development of Albury-Wodonga was motivated by 1960s concerns by the two state governments to decentralise development and population from Sydney and Melbourne, where long term population drift to the cities was bringing major challenges of population growth, housing shortages, affordability, traffic congestion and pollution which were coming to be seen as unmanageable. The decentralisation push was also aimed at providing Australians in non-metropolitan areas with a more equitable share of national resources and economic and social opportunities. In 1967, the Victorian Government suggested, to both the NSW Government and the Australian Commonwealth (Federal) Government, that Wodonga (in Victoria) and Albury (NSW) be planned and developed "as one complex" for "accelerated development" (Pennay 2005).

In 1972, a new Federal Labor government announced a National Growth Centres program to drive decentralisation of the state capital cities. Of the several regional centres designated as growth centres, Albury-Wodonga was the only trans-border one. The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation was formed through a 1973 agreement and supported by legislation passed by the federal government and two state governments, formalising a cross-border region spanning two states and seven local councils (Pennay 2005). The Development Corporation was given responsibility for strategic planning of the trans-border city region and was made the planning authority for major urban expansion projects. Its principal function was "to acquire, hold, manage and provide land in those areas designated for development" (NSW State Records, n.d., no page). The national Growth Centres strategy was abruptly abandoned with the dramatic removal of the Whitlam federal government in 1975. The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation's powers were curtailed and its planning powers removed, but it was not formally wound up until 2007. It continued to develop and sell the remaining land for urban development, and its legacies include urban and regional infrastructure and a regional framework and mechanism for parklands development. Following the dilution and eventual demise of the Development Corporation, collaboration in cross-border collaboration devolved to the two city councils via issues-based organisations and an informal Alliance of Councils and Shires of the Upper Murray (Brown and Bruerton, 2009).

The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation planned for a trans-border city of 300,000 people by 2000 (Pennay 2005), a population six times that of the area in 1973 (Harris and Dixon 1978). The current combined population of the two cities has only reached about 100,000, while growth of both Sydney and Melbourne has been dramatic over the same period, in a continued trend of centralisation of population, political and economic power in Australia's primary coastal capital cities.

Current efforts towards trans-border planning seem to be more driven by the local governments of Albury and Wodonga, with less involvement of the surrounding rural shires

that were part of the 1970s Growth Centre initiative, and with less immediate connection with the two state governments.

The *Two Cities One Community: Strategic Plan 2017-2021* was adopted jointly by the Mayors of Albury and Wodonga in 2017 with the message: "Our community does not necessarily see a border. They cross a river to share facilities, venues, infrastructure and services. They expect community leaders to adopt a regional perspective and advocate to state and federal governments on issues that impact their day to day lives" (Albury City and Wodonga City 2017: 3). However this plan is a twin cities plan rather than a city region plan, as it does not include surrounding rural shires that interact with these cities, and which were part of the Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre initiative of the early 1970s.

State Government Regional Plans addressing Albury-Wodonga as a trans-border city region

A desktop review of documents and websites suggests that the commitment of the two state governments to coordinated planning of Albury-Wodonga as a trans-border city region is mixed. This paper seeks evidence in the regional planning of the two states for identified regions along the Murray River state border, as well as evidence in the policies and actions of the Cross-Border Commissioners who have been appointed in each of these two states. The Murray River, which divides the twin cities of Albury and Wodonga and the planning jurisdictions of the two states, also divides the northern Victorian region of Hume from the southern NSW region of Riverina Murray.

The three states addressed by this paper (NSW, Victoria and Queensland) all use regional plans to provide their broad frameworks for land use and development, the role of key regional centres, infrastructure provision, economic well-being and environmental management. The approaches vary in each state, with Queensland's regional plans having been restricted to "State Interests" since 2014. The ACT, in contrast to the states, is effectively a city-state. Its planning addresses not only the urban area of Canberra and land within its borders, but also interactions with the region of NSW that surrounds Canberra.

The Riverina Murray Regional Plan is "centred on creating more jobs, strengthening the region's cities, towns and villages, sustainably managing its agricultural, extractive and natural resources and protecting the nationally significant Murray River" (Department of Planning and Environment website <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-Your-Area/Regional-Plans/Riverina-Murray>). Although the regional plan is jurisdictionally restricted to the NSW side of the river border, cross-border issues are prominent and the plan notes that Albury-Wodonga is one of three "regional cities" in the region and that it is the largest of seven cross-border communities. Aboriginal communities from both sides of the river are acknowledged in the Minister's foreword.

Albury and Wodonga are described in the plan as functioning as "a single economic centre, with employment, investment and services accessed across both locations", with Albury alone servicing "an extensive catchment of approximately 200,000 people [and providing] higher-order services, including for business, office and retail uses, and arts, culture, recreation and entertainment, which support the needs of smaller settlements across the region and in cross-border communities" (NSW Government 2017a: 57).

The Riverina Murray Regional Plan prominently demonstrates NSW government awareness that the region is closer to the interstate capital of Melbourne than to its own state capital

of Sydney: it boldly – in very large print – “acknowledge[s] the important role of this region’s centres and their relationship to, and export potential with, Melbourne and Victoria....” (NSW Government 2017a: 9).

The vision and goals of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan are supported by 29 “directions” and accompanying actions. Goal 4, Strong, connected and healthy communities is supported by Direction 23, “Create a connected and competitive environment for cross-border communities”, which in turn is supported by Action 24.1 “Work with the Victorian Government and cross-border councils to examine: barriers to and enablers of economic, housing and jobs growth; service delivery models; and infrastructure delivery, including transport infrastructure” (NSW Government 2017a: 51).

In contrast, the Hume Regional Growth Plan, from the Victorian side, is much less overt in its recognition of the trans-border city region, focusing more attention on Wodonga as a regional city in its own right, despite acknowledging “the influence of the combined urban area of Albury-Wodonga (recognised as one of Australia’s 18 major cities) in the Upper Hume sub-region” (State Government of Victoria 2014: iv). The area covered by Victoria’s Hume Regional Growth Plan includes four of the seven cross-border communities included in the NSW Riverina Murray Regional Plan: “Of these settlements, Albury provides a significant economic gateway to New South Wales and creates opportunities for Wodonga to leverage off this broader economic conurbation” (State of Victoria 2014: 58). Potential benefits from a new inland freight rail line (now under construction) and possible future high-speed rail between Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne are identified as providing opportunities for Albury-Wodonga, although this Regional Growth Plan has a tendency to highlight only Wodonga and other settlements within the state of Victoria.

In considering regional transport links, the Hume Regional Growth Plan notes that people from southern NSW travel to Melbourne for healthcare and that Albury-Wodonga benefits from “a reciprocal agreement that provides a single public health service, available to residents of either state. Hospital facilities in ... Albury-Wodonga ... provide higher order services to the wider region, including southern New South Wales” (State of Victoria 2014: 64).

Notwithstanding acknowledgment of cross-border settlements including Albury-Wodonga, the Hume Regional Growth Plan seems to step back from the innovative approach of the 1960s that led to Australia’s boldest experiment in city region planning through cooperation between the federal government, two state governments and seven local governments in the 1970s growth centre project. The current plan does map Albury and Wodonga as comprising a cross-border settlement, and the plan identifies future urban expansion areas south-east of Wodonga that were first identified for development in the 1970s growth centre plan, but no link is made to that earlier thinking.

The Hume Regional Growth Plan identifies the southern sub-region, within commuting distance of Melbourne, as an area that expects more significant growth than the Albury-Wodonga city region. This supports the argument by Harris and Dixon (1978) that Albury-Wodonga was too far from a major city to achieve the population and economic growth envisaged in the 1970s.

Cross-Border Commissioners and joint state agreements

To deal with the many inconsistencies and inefficiencies faced by residents and businesses located in cities and regions on state borders, both NSW and Victoria have appointed Cross-Border Commissioners in recent years. In 2012, the NSW Government established the Office of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner in order to identify and resolve cross-border issues. The current NSW Cross-Border Commissioner is based in Wagga Wagga, in proximity to NSW borders with both Victoria and ACT. The NSW Cross-Border Commissioner is attached to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and thus has access to key decision makers in government. In 2018, after pressure from Murray River communities, the Victorian Government also appointed a Cross-Border Commissioner, and the first Commissioner is based in Wodonga and operates under the auspices of the Minister for Regional Development. The Cross-Border Commissioners both have a wide remit to address incompatibilities between legislation and regulations across borders, and urban and regional planning is just one of those many issues. The NSW Cross-Border Commissioner has assisted in the development of agreements between that state and both the ACT (in 2016) and Queensland (in 2017) as discussed in the other case studies below, but there is not yet a similar agreement with Victoria. Given the success of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner in dealings with the other states, it is anticipated that the existence of Cross-Border Commissioners in both NSW and Victoria will lead to a strengthening of cross-border initiatives in future planning for Albury-Wodonga as an expanding trans-border city region.

Return of the Federal Government to city region planning: a Regional Deal for Albury-Wodonga

Following its withdrawal from the Growth Centre projects in 1975, the Australian Government has generally been prepared to leave urban issues to the two lower levels of government until 2015, when it reintroduced a Cities portfolio. This reflects wider recognition that cities and city regions are critical to the economic and social well-being of Australia. One of the new initiatives of the federal government is to fund City Deals, a partnership scheme based on the UK model, whereby the three levels of government and the community work in partnership to align planning, investment and governance to deliver “a shared vision for productive and liveable cities” (Australian Government, nd, <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/city-deals/index.aspx>).

The federal government also offers similar place-based Regional Deals, and Albury-Wodonga was announced as a pilot cross-border regional deal recipient in March 2019 (Australian Government 2019). Under the ten-year AUD\$3.2 million deal, the federal government, two state governments and two city councils will engage with business, industry and the community to develop and implement a strategy for population growth and economic development to ensure that Albury-Wodonga “remains a nationally-significant, liveable and prosperous region” (ibid.). If implemented well, this regional deal promises to be a major means of achieving better outcomes for Albury-Wodonga by treating the trans-border city region as one.

2.3. Integrating Australia's Capital City and its trans-border region, 1995 to 2019

Australia's capital city Canberra, founded in 1911, has been comprehensively planned since 1959 by the ACT Planning Authority and its predecessor the National Capital Development Commission. The city's strong history of planning initially occurred solely within the spatial constraints of the 2348 square kilometres of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). By the 1990s there was increasing recognition that Canberra played a valuable role as the major city for the surrounding region of NSW, and Canberra's planners became increasingly involved in NSW planning of the surrounding trans-border region.

An early example of this trans-border approach to city region planning was the adoption of NSW's first Sydney-Canberra Corridor Strategy in 1995 (McKenzie 1997). The emphasis of that strategy was as much on connections with Sydney as with Canberra, as well as the corridor itself which consisted of a string of towns and smaller cities set in a scenic and productive landscape along the 200 kilometre highway and rail corridor linking the two major cities. The ACT planners followed this in 1998 with the production of the ACT and Sub-Region Plan. NSW updated its corridor study in 2007 to become the Sydney-Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy 2007-31. The strategy recognised and sought to plan for the effects of the growth of both Sydney and Canberra on the region between the two capital cities. Although the Corridor Strategy's focus was mainly on the region between Sydney's outskirts and the ACT border, it gave prominent recognition to the fact that Canberra and the immediately adjacent smaller NSW city of Queanbeyan effectively operate as a single metropolitan area.

The Corridor Strategy refers to the 2006 signing of two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) entitled the ACT–NSW Cross-Border Region Settlement Agreement and the ACT–NSW Cross-Border Water Supply Agreement. At the same time, both governments signed the ACT-NSW Regional Management Framework Agreement (RMFA) (ACT and NSW Governments 2006). These MOUs were signed by the ACT Chief Administrator and the NSW Premier and have laid the way not only for updated MOUs since then, but more importantly for an expansion of the cooperation between the two jurisdictions in the planning of Canberra as a city region that extends beyond the ACT borders.

The ongoing commitment of both governments to Canberra-region cooperation since the 1990s can be attributed to decades of voluntary cooperation through diverse formal and informal collaborations including the Regional Leaders' Forum (RLF); the Capital Region Development Board (CRDB); and sub-regional planning strategy working groups. The cooperative approach formalised through the Corridor Strategy and MOUs (renewed in 2011 and 2016) has enabled current regional planning to be increasingly collaborative across the border, including at the levels of the surrounding local governments.

An important regional governance mechanism, established in 2015, is the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO), which “provides a forum for councils, State agencies and other stakeholders to work together at a regional level to identify shared priorities [and deliver] better outcomes for communities” (CRJO website, 2019). The three core functions of CRJO are: (1) regional strategic planning and priority setting; (2) intergovernmental collaboration; and (3) regional leadership and advocacy (ibid.) The 10 NSW local governments in the region

surrounding the ACT are CRJO members and the ACT Government is an associate member of the organisation.

The region surrounding the ACT border is now addressed by the South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036 (NSW Government 2017b). "The combined population of the local government areas within an hour's commute of the ACT, and the Territory's population itself, will increase to more than 660,000 by 2033 – a larger population than the Gold Coast today." (ibid., p4). Of the planning instruments reviewed in this paper, this regional plan is the most overt in its recognition of the significance of the cross-border relationship. The vision of the plan is for "a *borderless region* in Australia's most geographically diverse natural environment with the nation's capital at its heart" (ibid., p8, emphasis added). The regional plan is framed within this strong conception of the region as "a connected and borderless Canberra region." There are no inter-regional rivalries here, just a community-supported conviction that the prosperity of the region is dependent on Canberra and vice-versa. Canberra's airport, its jobs market, high order services, cultural institutions and lifestyle qualities are seen as assets for the region. Conversely, the region is recognised for providing additional housing opportunities (both affordable and prestige), recreational opportunities (ranging from bushwalking and camping to snow skiing and beach surfing), fine produce and scenic landscapes.

The NSW regional plan refers to its evolution from consultation with the ACT Planning Authority and the local governments of the region. In particular, it acknowledges the complementary approach taken by the ACT Planning Strategy 2012, which "acknowledges that Canberra's success depends on its relationship to surrounding areas. It acknowledges the importance of regional collaboration on biodiversity, transport and economic development" (NSW Government 2017b: 13). Those sentiments are reinforced in the 2018 "refresh" of the ACT Planning Strategy (Direction 1.4, p46), which is perhaps otherwise more focused on Canberra itself within the ACT border (ACT Government 2018). The ACT Plan reciprocates by emphasising that the NSW South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036 contains several joint initiatives and actions in parallel with the matching ACT plan and policies (p48). Mutual calls for collaboration are acknowledged, most notably by Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CRJO), as is the ACT-NSW Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Collaboration, as well as collaboration arrangements with a key adjoining council (p49).

The South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036 has provisions to protect the flight path for Canberra Airport, which is seen as vital to the economy of the surrounding region (Action 1.1, p15). Direction 19, "strengthen cross-border connectivity", addresses the importance of achieving legal and contractual reforms to allow seamless cross-border public transport services for towns and housing developments within commuting distance of Canberra (p44).

As Canberra's ACT Planning Strategy 2012 and 2018 seek to transform low density Canberra into a more compact urban form, the NSW South East and Tablelands Regional Plan acknowledges and attempts to limit the corresponding increase in development of low density development across the border (Direction 25, p53). This is an attempt to guard against the experience of Vancouver, Washington in the US, where significant car-dependent low density development has provided an unofficial alternative to the compact settlement pattern pursued across its border with Portland, Oregon (Bae 2000, in O'Hare 2011). Under Direction 26, proposals are advanced for cross-border infrastructure and monitoring systems

for land, housing and water requirements. In the final section of the Plan, key planning priorities are identified for those NSW local government areas that adjoin the ACT border.

CRJO and the ACT Government are currently lobbying the federal government to back a “Canberra Region Deal” to boost the city and its region by a coordinated investment in infrastructure and enhanced ‘borderlessness’ in delivery of higher order services such as tertiary education and health care (CRJO and ACT Government 2019).

2.4. SEQ and North Coast NSW: uneven approaches to cross-border planning 2005-2019

The third Australian case study city region that spans state borders is South East Queensland (SEQ) and north coast NSW (NCNSW). SEQ is a large and fast-growing city region which encompasses the Queensland capital, Brisbane and several smaller cities with a total region population of 3.5 million, projected to be home to 5.3 million by 2041 (Queensland Government 2017). SEQ’s urban interface with the state border, with a combined population of approximately 700,000, consists of the City of Gold Coast (Queensland) and the contiguous urban area of Tweed Shire in NSW (ABS 2019). Gold Coast-Tweed is Australia’s sixth largest city and one of its most rapidly growing city regions. Gold Coast Airport, straddling the border, serves as international gateway to both regions.

Cross-border planning in this large trans-border city region is significantly under-developed, particularly from the Queensland side. Regional plans have been in place in these two adjoining regions since 2005 and 2006 respectively (Queensland Government 2005; NSW Government 2006). From and including that time, there has been a steady building of attention to trans-border issues from the NSW side and a fluctuating level of interest from Queensland. There has not been a true bilateral commitment to the promise offered by the statement that “the NSW and Queensland governments have formed a partnership to share information and promote consistent sustainable planning strategies” (NSW Government, 2006: 44).

The SEQ Council of Mayors, a powerful regional local government advocacy organisation, was established in 2005 to represent the interests of the fast growing SEQ regions. It recognises that SEQ has grown into a city region that is “no longer just a series of disparate geographic areas but a region that, in practical terms, functions as a single metropolitan area” (Council of Mayors website, accessed 21 July 2019). Given that the SEQ region extends to – and, de facto, across – the state border, it is astounding that neither of the two councils abutting the urbanised section of the border – Gold Coast City (in Queensland) and Tweed Shire (in NSW) – are currently members of this influential and highly effective group of ten SEQ councils. Consequently in the otherwise sophisticated current proposal for a SEQ City Deal partnership between the federal, Queensland and local governments for transforming SEQ into a high-performing polycentric city region, there is only one mention of the state border, and that is as the southern boundary of the region (SEQ Council of Mayors and Queensland Government 2019: 8) rather than a transition line in the contiguous settlement pattern. It is therefore not surprising that the document does not advance the case for improved cross-border coordination in planning and development.

Despite their non-participation in the Council of Mayors, the border local governments of Tweed Shire and Gold Coast City have a strong relationship. An agreement exists between the two border councils, providing for bi-monthly consultations between their strategic regional planning teams “to coordinate planning, infrastructure and response to traffic

issues (Brown and Bruerton, 2009, p.57). In practice, this level of cross-border council communication and collaboration happens less frequently, but is invoked to deal with major issues including planning updates (senior planners, pers.comm.).

The current state-level regional plans for the two adjoining regions are *ShapingSEQ: South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017*, and the *NSW North Coast Regional Plan 2036*. Both were released in 2017, soon after the two states renewed their partnership MOU – similar to that noted for the ACT and NSW, above – aimed at information sharing, resolution of cross-border anomalies, and promotion of consistent sustainable planning strategies. The two regional plans show starkly contrasting levels of commitment to the updated *Queensland and New South Wales Statement of Principles and Priorities for Cross-border Collaboration 2016-2019* identifies four key focus areas for cross-border collaboration: i) regional economic development, ii) aligning services and sharing information, iii) local transport, iv) issues of national significance (Queensland and NSW Governments, 2017). As with the ACT-NSW MOU, the document is accompanied by an annual Worklist detailing planning projects. The worklist is reviewed through an Annual Report.

ShapingSEQ's ambitious 50-year Vision and specific 25-year goals for plan delivery do not carry the collaborative cross-border aspirations of the MOU very far forward. The border is largely ignored, other than in acknowledgment of opportunities for North Coast NSW to benefit from SEQ's significant population growth and employment market and the tourism potential of the World Heritage landscapes that span the border. It recognises that upgrading infrastructure will connect the regions and support access to employment and recreation, while also enhancing the flow of goods, services and skills (Queensland Government, 2017). Commitment to the MOU is not prominent in *ShapingSEQ*. While not completely ignored in mapping within *ShapingSEQ*, the border and interactions beyond it receive little attention. The border is termed the Southern Gateway (Queensland Government 2017: 142). This gateway comprises an emerging "Regional Economic Cluster" (REC) hosting priority sectors that offer cross-border services including an international and domestic airport, major regional hospitals health, manufacturing (focused on aviation industries) and tourism infrastructure.

In contrast, *North Coast Regional Plan 2036* brings cross-border planning much more to the fore, including in its Vision statement: "Northern communities have established important links and are integrated with a burgeoning [SEQ.] Southern and coastal communities are building relationships and leveraging opportunities from the Pacific Highway upgrade" (NSW Government, 2017). The NSW Department of Planning and Environment stresses the importance of collaboration with the Queensland Government by strengthening communities of interest and cross-regional relationships (NSW Government, 2017). The contrasting regional planning visions reveal the different significance the two states place on cross-border collaboration: NSW acknowledges its importance, Queensland downplays it. *North Coast Regional Plan 2036* dedicates an entire strategy to cross-regional collaboration, The fifth of 25 "Directions" of the Plan is to strengthen cross-regional relationships, with cross-border connections prominent in the rationale and actions under this direction (NSW Government 2017: 25-26). Cross-border relationships are prominent in the text and maps conveying the *North Coast Regional Plan 2036*, and almost absent in *ShapingSEQ*.

The NSW Cross-Border Commissioner has noted key issues affecting many community and business sectors: summer time zones, trade registrations/licences, fees and costs, education,

transport, health, community services, policing and legal differences, emergency management, agriculture, environment, and tourism. (NSW Government, 2012). Those trans-border concerns that could be addressed in city region planning are taken up in the Plan, and the Cross-Border Commissioner is declared a key agent in achieving the Plan's cross-border outcomes: "The NSW Cross-Border Commissioner, the Queensland Government and councils will work together to better integrate cross-border servicing and land use planning to remove any barriers to economic, housing and jobs growth" (NSW Government 2017: 12).

The hard work ahead of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner is demonstrated most starkly by the lack of cross-border commitment from the Queensland side that is evident in the current City Deal proposal, as discussed earlier in this section.

3. Conclusions

This paper has reviewed three Australian case studies of the planning of city regions that transcend internal state or territory borders. Despite such efforts commencing up to 50 years ago, the three case studies do not combine to tell a story of a uniformly successful model of trans-border city region planning at these three borders of the state of NSW.

The limited success of Albury-Wodonga in attracting sustained growth in population, employment and facilities may be because these twin border cities are so far from the nation's capital cities which attract the greatest population and investment: Melbourne is 300 kilometres away (Harris and Dixon 1978). It is yet to be seen whether cross-border collaboration will be renewed by the "Regional Deal" securing the involvement of three levels of government including both states with their respective Cross-Border Commissioners.

The Canberra region has the advantage of being centred on itself as a capital city of critical population mass and national political and cultural importance. In addition, it is part of a connected corridor of urban centres extending 200 kilometres from the outer suburbs of the NSW capital, Sydney. The ACT and NSW Governments, together with surrounding local governments, provide the most exemplary approaches to collaboration in trans-border planning. The critical success factors demonstrated here over the past 25+ years arguably include:

- willing cooperation between the state and territory governments and their planners;
- clear conceptualisation and political and public uptake of narratives of a Sydney-Canberra Corridor and a Capital Region;
- The signing of a MOU between the ACT Chief Administrator and the NSW Premier in 2006 and its continued support and implementation by the two governments;
- the desire of surrounding rural shires to benefit economically, socially and culturally from their proximity to the national capital;
- a consistent record of actively addressing cross-border issues in plans made by the ACT government, NSW government and local governments over a sustained period;
- the involvement of the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner where necessary to broker expansion of Canberra across the territory border into NSW.

Lessons from ACT-NSW border need to be drawn on to address cross-border regional planning as the third case study city region, Queensland's SEQ, continues to grow across the border into the North Coast of NSW. This trans-border city region is the most populous and fastest growing of the three case studies, manifesting the continued growth of the 200 kilometre coastal city extending from Brisbane, the Queensland state capital which is only 100 kilometres from this border. Plans by the NSW Government, eg the 2006 Far North Coast Regional Strategy and its successor the 2016 North Coast Regional Growth Plan, have addressed the border and key cross-border centres for some years now, while the most recent SEQ Regional Plan, Shaping SEQ 2017, pays scant attention to cross-border planning issues, and these issues are not prominent in the plans of the two local councils that address development of the contiguous urban development that crosses the border. The unevenness of the response is surprising, given that a MOU and cooperation agreement have existed between the State Premiers of Queensland and NSW since 2006. On the other hand, it is not so surprising that NSW is further advanced in trans-border planning as it has fifty years of experience dealing with these issues on three of its four land borders, while Queensland only faces these issues at one of its borders, and this occurs at the periphery of the state's main city region, SEQ, which is centred around the state capital of Brisbane.

Further research will include key informant interviews with senior planners and community leaders in the three trans-border regions studied here, as well as international comparisons with city regions that transcend international borders.

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