

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2010

## **Investing in Population Growth – A positive Spin**

Logic must return to the Population debate says The biannual Committees for Cities meeting is taking place in Portland, Victoria.

Bringing together international, interstate, rural, regional and urban 'Committees for cities' groups, representing Melbourne, Perth, Auckland, Portland, Ballarat, Geelong, Wyndham, and potential new groups in Wagga Wagga, Bellerine Peninsula and Albany, the meeting discussed issues of critical concern and the strengthening of their partnership. The 'Committees for Cities' alliance is a growing force in Australasian policy debate<sup>1</sup>.

A critical issue discussed in this meeting, typical of the thought leadership role of the Committees for Cities was the growing disillusionment in the lack of quality in the public discourse debate around population growth.

The Committees for Cities group accept that Australia and New Zealand are experiencing normal long term average population growth of around 1.6 %, with a temporary mild spike to 2% in the last year or so.

"This temporary population spike has distracted the community from a rational debate on the future for our countries, into an irrational and emotional debate. The irrationality and emotion sees some people looking to cap population growth rather than investing on our future" the group said.

"Our analysis and acceptance of the normal growth rates allows for logical long term planned maintenance, renewal & enhancement of physical and social infrastructure that will ensure our communities are sustainable economically, socially and environmentally" the group said.

On the economic front the group believes that there is a need to maintain planned skilled migration at current levels to help meet the 2011-2025 unfunded superannuation liabilities faced across Australia. After 2025 the superannuation guarantee effect kicks in and may allow for a slow down of skilled migration if that was the wish of the community in 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> Committee for Sydney is a usual participant but was unable to attend this meeting.

“Economic growth must be matched with environmental sustainability and social sustainability that can only be planned for if we have a realistic approach to population growth” said (insert Committee for spokesperson’s name).

According to the Committees for Cities group, Australasia is well positioned as a region, country and time zone to have long term sustainable lifestyle improvements.

Asked why the Committees for Cities group was engaging in the debate the group said, “our role is to take the emotion out of the debate and put rationality back in. We need to plan for the growth to capture and shape a long term non partisan vision for our cities and countries. Our organizations are freed from the limitation of politics, and can further inform rational debate.”

“We as a group of the largest organizations and businesses in our communities can enhance the debate around responsible managed growth, having proactive plans and recommendations for infrastructure funding and future development based on a reasonable assessment of future population sizes.”

Being unelected the benefit of ‘Committee for Cities’ group is that they can look beyond electoral cycles and partisan politics to take a long term view of how to shape our lifestyles.

The Committees for cities group is looking to expand to other Australasia capital cities and regional towns, and have began a dialogue with other international cities including Buenos Aires, Santiago and Toronto.

Committee for Cities – benefits of expansion:

- Expands collective influence
- Expanding intellectual capacity
- Powerful network
- Sharing best practice