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Local government co-ordination: metropolitan governance in twenty-first century Australia

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in this report

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DELWP	Victorian Government's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DPTI	South Australian Government's Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
EU	European Union
GAROC	Greater Adelaide Region Organisation of Councils
GCCSA	Greater Capital City Statistical Areas
GLA	Greater London Authority
GSC	Greater Sydney Commission
IMAP	Inner Melbourne Action Plan
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
LGA	Local Government Area
LGASA	Local Government Association of South Australia
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
LGV	Local Government Victoria
NFRC	National Federation Reform Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SEQ	South East Queensland
VRS	Verband Region Stuttgart

Executive summary

Key points

- Continuing growth of, and interdependencies within, Australia's metropolitan city-regions increase the need for efficient coordination and effective metropolitan governance structures.
- Metropolitan governance structures vary greatly between Australian states, and consequently there are different levels of local government engagement with strategic policy and action.
- Australia can gain insights from international examples about possible models for local government coordination and metropolitan governance, and vice versa.
- State governments are the dominant actors for urban planning and transport infrastructure and, consequently, also often the driving force for metropolitan strategy-making and coordination at this scale.
- Local governments have no constitutional powers, but still hold an important role in metropolitan strategy-making and policy coordination.
- Recent planning and infrastructure reforms in Australian states indicate a trend towards further centralisation at state level, with (planning) powers of local government being weakened for both policy-making and in development assessment.
- Such trends are being exacerbated by local government reform, pursued in the interest of increased efficiency but often resulting in reduced local control.
- The trends of centralisation and weakening of local government powers raise questions about subsidiarity (taking decisions as close to the citizens as possible), democracy and legitimacy.

- **Nonetheless, there are numerous examples of informal and bottom-up strategic coordination of local government. This often occurs on a sub-regional level within metropolitan regions, and has two objectives: advocacy, and coordination of specific issues (including major projects).**
- **Although often informal or ad hoc, existing experiments in local government can offer examples of how to strengthen and improve government coordination on a metropolitan level.**
- **There is an increasing role for a policy framework for metropolitan regions and that better supports multi-level governance and coordination, including the role of local government authorities.**

Key findings

Within Australia's three-tier federal government system, the planning and management of metropolitan complexity (including at what scale, how, by whom, and with what resources), is a contested agenda. Urban development and growth in Australia does not adhere with local or state government administrative boundaries, particularly in relation to complex issues such as climate change, urban habitat, transport infrastructure, water and waste management and energy transitions. The interconnected nature and increasing complexity of Australian metropolitan governance raises critical questions about the existing political fragmentation and multiplicity of boundaries, functions and government services that often replicate and compete with one another. This, in turn, has reignited calls for metropolitan -scale governance.

Some form of metropolitan governance structure is essential to address a range of pressing issues effectively. These issues range from achieving sustainable development goals such as action on climate change, through to coordinating population and urban development growth, and minimising spatial inequities and suburban sprawl. Whether governance structures take the form of a metropolitan government, a coalition, or a network will need to be negotiated in every city region and metropolitan area, as will the way in which boundaries are drawn. These negotiations will be influenced by potential actors, existing structures, the most pressing problems, and the available opportunities for cooperation and participation. The focus of this report is the role of local governments in cooperation with one another, the state governments, or further actors at the metropolitan scale.

In Australia, the dominant actor in metropolitan-scale government is at the state-level. Other actors, such as local and national governments, business and the community, are only partially involved. Australian local governments have historically had little autonomy and constitutional recognition within the federal system. Concomitantly local government reform has emphasised goals of efficiency and there has been a trend towards removing (planning) powers from local government, and shifting power towards state governments. This trend effectively casts local government in the role of 'line manager'. For instance, in the area of housing, some state governments set targets that Local Government Areas (LGAs) must achieve.

Nevertheless, as this report demonstrates, local government are key actors in metropolitan governance and there are numerous examples of bottom-up, informal metropolitan or sub-regional cooperation structures exist at various scales throughout Australia's metropolitan regions. Experiments in metropolitan governance involve local government advocacy, representation, collaboration and engagement across all tiers of government.

The present and emergent models of metropolitan governance in Australia have not emphasised participation or democratic impulses at the local or metropolitan levels. Yet the community possesses the strongest influence on metropolitan governance during state government elections. Metropolitan transport and planning issues have played an important role in a number of recent state elections. For example, planning and transport issues played a crucial role in the election campaigns and results of the last three elections in Victoria.

The way in which local government structures are developed—whether bottom-up or top-down—has consequences for legitimacy and scope of action. This development depends on existing cultures of cooperation, democratic traditions, and the will to negotiate and reach consensus between different relevant actors. In order for a newly established metropolitan governance structure to enjoy success, it is necessary that it:

- is accepted by citizens and political actors, as well as other non-public actors (legitimacy)
- covers the relevant geographical area (territorial cover)
- facilitates relevant decision-making, resulting in decisions that can be implemented (authority and autonomy).

Australia can gain insights from international experiences about models of metropolitan governance and processes for establishing durable cooperation structures, and vice versa. Experiences from abroad show how different types of integration (e.g. between land use and transport planning), as well as coordination between diverse government actors and across scale, might be achieved. The need to align the priorities and goals of municipalities and possibly higher-level authorities through consultation and engagement processes have been identified as crucial in the development of metropolitan-scale mechanisms and instruments across urban regions.

Arrangements for metropolitan governance vary considerably. Metropolitan governance is shaped by context including: existing institutional, legal and political arrangements; the most pressing local problems; the existing culture of cooperation; and the will of different relevant actors to cooperate and negotiate. The role of local government has been undervalued and can be an effective way of operationalising diverse metropolitan governance structures, offering:

- legitimacy through elections of local councils
- cooperation with the local level through the congruence of actors
- a focus on shared interests in the city region
- the fit of the territorial cover (however, in Australia, some local government areas actually cover metropolitan and rural parts)
- the flexibility of the territorial cover (if the functional area becomes larger local councils can be included), and
- the potential for addressing issues of subsidiarity.

Policy development options

The point of departure for this report is the role and potential of local government coordination in 21st century Australian metropolitan governance. This considers how the principle of subsidiarity (localising decision-making) might provide local identity and drive actions that can be understood and practiced within a larger metropolitan context to create more responsive, more effective and potentially more democratic outcomes. Previous examinations of Australian metropolitan governance have focused on tensions surrounding state and federal level intervention and cooperation (or lack thereof) and, increasingly, on the tensions between state governments, private actors and civil society. Significant questions remain regarding the democratic 'offer' and role (real and potential) of local government within the Australian context.

In Australia, the solutions posed to the growing challenges of metropolitan governance are often inadequate, conflicting and uncoordinated (Stilwell and Troy 2000; Gleeson, Dodson et al. 2010; Steele 2020). Existing metropolitan governance mechanisms reflect: a mismatch in scope and scale; a lack of democratic legitimacy and accountability; and inadequacies of fiscal and taxation policy reform levers and outcomes (Spiller 2018). The use of different sectoral policies at differing scales tends to simply shift problems across administrative borders while offering contradictory policies that generate more spatial problems than they resolve (Dühr, Colomb et al. 2010). Similarly, reliance on parallel multi-level governance mechanisms (the silos of instituted bureaucracy) that are institutionally divided, fails to address the issues and challenges increasingly manifest in cities at the metropolitan scale. The resulting impact affects the lived experience of our cities and their ecological and economic capacity.

Australia's existing governance structures pose significant challenges at the metropolitan scale. This is exacerbated by a lack of constitutional mechanisms for enacting metropolitan governance structures. In particular there is an absence of clear and effective institutional arrangements for the planning of urban development and the coordination of urban services, including infrastructure, below the state government level. There are no clear means of collective democratic expression about resource allocation and strategic issues at the metropolitan (or regional) scale. Although, as outlined in this report, examples exist and experiments continue. Critically, the uncoordinated and highly differentiated responses to key urban issues related to climate change adaptation (e.g. housing, water, energy, planning and development) are increasingly evident in Australian cities (Gleeson and Steele 2012; Newton, Bertram et al. 2018), revealing one, yet significant, element of the urgency of this governance issue.

Several commentators assert Australia needs metropolitan governance structures that are able to 'distance [themselves] from state and federal governments when deciding metro-scale infrastructure and services priorities' (Tomlinson 2017: 1). In Australia, this means being accountable to a metropolitan constituency, undertaking strategic planning, being responsible for metro-scale infrastructure projects and services, generating revenue, and being fiscally autonomous.

Some of the benefits of greater local government engagement and coordination in metropolitan governance include greater connectivity, resource sharing efficiencies, congruence of services, and harmonising of policies and legislation. Opportunities for local government coordination at the metropolitan scale include breaking institutional barriers and setting a precedent for collaboration, building capacity and sharing knowledge, budgetary efficiencies, and the potential for innovation. All of these benefits would, in turn, support planning and implementation at the metropolitan scale and the potential for better outcomes for the community it seeks to serve (Steele, Eslami-Andargoli et al. 2013).

The metropolitan challenge in Australia is to find governance approaches and mechanisms that are not only fit for purpose, but are also democratically defensible, adhere to the core principles of equity and transparency, and include an emphasis on recognising local need and difference. Whether this involves 'reinventing the institutional wheel' (Dovers 2009; Dovers and Hezri 2010) is unclear, but it will certainly require greater involvement of local government, and better overall coordination between the different tiers of government as central to the reform agenda.

The study

This AHURI report examines the role of local government engagement and coordination in 21st century Australian metropolitan governance. This includes the consideration of how local identity and actions can be understood and practiced within a larger metropolitan context to create more responsive, effective and democratic outcomes. This research suggests that local governments are central to the liveability, development and functioning of Australia's metropolitan regions. However, as an analysis of models of practice shows, local governments are generally removed from real influence on issues that have scope to create change in our cities. Moreover, the institutions of metropolitan governance are myriad, and the fragmentary approaches are deliberate policy devices.

This report is exploratory. It considers different approaches to the role of local government in contemporary metropolitan governance, reflecting on the Australian and international experience, and offering pathways for further consideration. To do this, the research reviews both literature and policy examples of Australian metropolitan governance and the role of local government, as well as the limited examples that explore these two concepts together within the Australian context. The research approach comprised an initial literature review of international and Australian metropolitan governance, local government and collaborative approaches. This was followed by a desktop review of Australian policy and practice in the context of metropolitan governance. To enable a breadth of input to these stages, while retaining a focus on existing research, an expert advisory team was established to assist in scoping the work and expert workshops were conducted.

The literature review focused on metropolitan governance and local government coordination. This included the history of the metropolitan governance debate, recent academic debates and practical experiences with metropolitan governance structures (both nationally and internationally), urban challenges and their implications for metropolitan governance, and conceptualisations of city-regions and metropolitan areas. While the Australian experience was the focus of the research, relevant international institutional models and experiences, particularly federal systems, were also considered. Collaboration, partnerships and networks in Australian local government were also considered during the literature review.

During the desktop review, metropolitan governance structures in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland were examined and summarised. This involved consulting state and local government websites, analysing metropolitan strategies and other policies, and searching for further examples of local government collaborations. A framework table was used to compare descriptions and identify differences between the states.

The first expert workshop was held in October 2019 and provided the basis for scoping the literature review. The second expert workshop was held in February 2020 and was used to discuss the findings of the literature and desktop reviews, and to identify research gaps and additional pathways of enquiry. The expert panel included Professor Paul Burton (Griffith University), Adjunct Professor Bruce James (Griffith University), Dr Marcus Spiller (RMIT and SGS Economics and Planning), Professor Jago Dodson (RMIT University), and Professor Peter Phibbs (University of Sydney).

1. Introduction

Australia's metropolitan regions are experiencing the significant pressures of population and housing growth, economic change and infrastructure deficits. Australia's metropolitan regions are a patchwork of federal government comprised of local government, national government and dominant state governments. This means that despite various attempts at reform over more than a century, most decisions that affect the metropolitan scale—such as planning, transport, urban growth—are overseen by the state governments. Historically there has been little scope for local government collaboration and influence.

The renewed interest in Australian metropolitan governance is a consequence of both the existing challenges faced by our cities, and emerging models of investment and policy-making (e.g. those involving stakeholders such as the Australian Government and private sector property and infrastructure interests). New models of decision-making at the metropolitan and sub-metropolitan level have developed, and incorporate different tiers of government in both collaborative or representative forms. The role of local governments in these new and emerging metropolitan governance models are the central concern of this report.

This report is exploratory. It considers local and international approaches to roles for local government in contemporary metropolitan governance—reflecting on the Australian experience—and offers pathways for further consideration. This report contains four key parts:

- Firstly, the report offers an outline of the key policy issues underpinning this inquiry – the challenges of Australian metropolitan governance, with particular reference to the actual role and potential of local government.
- Second, the report includes a review of the metropolitan governance literature from Australia and internationally. This review addresses some significant conceptual issues and reflections on contemporary practice in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities of local government at the metropolitan scale.

- Third, the report offers a review of existing models of metropolitan governance approaches in the areas of planning, transport and broader strategy-making particular reference to the roles and limitations of local government. It includes a focus on Australian metropolitan examples, followed by a review of international examples that offer critical insights into the Australian context.
- Finally, an agenda for further research is outlined that offers scope for ongoing consideration of actual and emerging models and experiments in metropolitan governance in Australia in a climate of growth-led change.

In the 21st century, Australia's metropolitan regions are experiencing significant pressures from population growth, economic precarity and infrastructure deficits that threaten their liveability and environmental sustainability. There is renewed interest in Australian metropolitan governance as a result of the current crises facing our city-regions (such as the bushfires and the global COVID-19 pandemic), as well as longer-standing concerns with urban growth, infrastructure deficiencies and resulting diseconomies. New models of investment and policymaking are emerging, particularly those involving stakeholders such as the Australian Government and private sector property and infrastructure interests. These new models have raised questions over better coordination in Australia's multi-level governance system and across large and growing metropolitan capital city-regions.

The establishment of the *National Federation Reform Council* (NFRC) on 29 May 2020, to replace the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), has further ignited policy and public interest in the effectiveness of the Australian federal system to deliver on key principles of democracy, equity, efficiency and sustainability for cities and regions and has also had an influence on the role of local government on this level.

This project, while undertaken before the abolishment of COAG, offers a timely exploration of the role of local government in contemporary Australian metropolitan governance within a rapidly changing context. The research reflects on both the Australian and international experience, offering pathways for further consideration, including a framework of collaborative metropolitan governance models.

1.1 Why this research was conducted

Australia is 'a nation of cities', yet effective models of metropolitan governance have proven elusive. Local government has an important role to represent community aspirations from the ground-up, yet the financial and political incentives for metropolitan scale governance in Australia are often framed in ways that exclude and/or reduce the role for local actors. This is particularly noticeable in urgent planning issues related to transport, urban growth management and housing provision. Land use planning in particular has been subjected to processes of streamlining and uniformity that have reduced the previously differentiated and locally responsive decision-making roles of local government (Buxton, Goodman et al. 2016; Maginn and Foley 2018). This has been coupled with a shift in the focus of metropolitan strategy-making towards an increasing emphasis on processes of regulatory implementation, emanating largely from state governments.

Historically, several attempts have been made to reconcile local government involvement in the metropolitan scale governance in Australia's cities. Melbourne's local government amalgamation process of 1890-1915 (Davison and Dunstan 2018) and the formation of a greater Brisbane City Council in 1925 (Hamnett and Freestone 2018) proffer two varied examples of political will and success, achieved over a century of governance reforms. Other models of metropolitan governance include representative structures working with a multiplicity of local government, such as the now defunct Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) (Gleeson, Dodson et al. 2010), or the contemporary Greater Sydney Commission where engagement in decision-making includes a variety of stakeholders (Morrison and Van Den Nouwelant 2020). Each of these examples is situated within a context of State Government interests and motivations for metropolitan regions. These interests reflect the metropolitan primacy of Australian states and are often strongly related to notions of government efficiency and administrative reform in the context of Australian federalism.

There is also a range of policy and infrastructure experiments and examples at work in Australia's metropolitan cities that have clear implications for metropolitan governance, despite less explicit connection to institutionalised governance at the metropolitan scale. In recent decades, processes of change and innovation in metropolitan governance in Australia have included: explicit models of cooperative governance, such as the Greater Sydney Commission; voluntary groups such the Council of Mayors South East Queensland (CoMSEQ); state-led strategic planning projects and agencies (such as the Victorian Planning Authority and Infrastructure Victoria) with a remit to engage with local governance practices (primarily, but not exclusively concerned with metropolitan issues); and Australian Government ventures into city-shaping, such as the developing 'City Deals' process that includes local governments in areas such as South East Queensland (SEQ), Adelaide and Western Sydney.

New types of development 'interventions' include privately-led investments in large projects affecting the city, particularly in transport infrastructure provision. Examples include public-private partnerships in large, city-changing transport infrastructure and in major urban renewal projects (Gurran and Phibbs 2018; Searle 2020). They also relate to the consequences of emerging Australian Government 'City Deals'. These represent forms of planning and investment with profound consequences for Australian city governance, that involve federal, state and local government as well as governance arrangements involving private and quasi-state actors. The role of local government in these interventions is variable and will be discussed in this report.

Local governments, individually and cooperatively, have the potential to play a significant role in metropolitan governance, particularly as it is experienced at the community level. However, they have an inconsistent history of effective collaboration in metropolitan governance. This is due to a lack of constitutional powers and prolonged periods of generally weak political and democratic status, including local government amalgamation and reform that has changed the nature of relationships between state and local government, and increasingly between all three tiers of government. Consequently, local governments in many Australian states continue to experience revenue constraints and the challenges of operating at a small scale within larger metropolitan regions.

Exploring the role of local government within Australian metropolitan governance research agenda addresses an important gap in the academic and policy literature. Population growth and urbanisation are proceeding at historically high rates, including transformations in transport, work, housing and urban environments in climate change. The relationships between the different tiers of government, as well as community and private sector interests, are open to contestation. This can be seen through models for funding and decision-making that are emerging in cities in Australia and elsewhere. The implications are reduced efficiencies and capacity to address sustainability. There are opportunities to address this through a focus on metropolitan governance and the role of local government within the Australian context.

1.2 Research aim and questions

This research offers a perspective on the role of local government in Australian metropolitan governance with a particular reflection on collaborative models and processes. Understanding the relationships, models and experiments of metropolitan governance, insofar as they exist in Australia and elsewhere, provides insight into policy approaches that recognise scale, representation and capacity as critical issues in urban governance at and across the varied tiers of Australian federalism. Consideration of the limitations and failures of these models remains valuable, as does the way in which collaboration is conceptualised within and between the tiers and across breadth of governance in Australia's metropolitan cities. This allows a discussion of the implications for the role of local government in contemporary and future metropolitan governance arrangements.

The aim of this research is a critical focus on the role of local government (and particularly local governments as a collaborative entity) to support and promote effective metropolitan governance that results in sustainable outcomes for Australian cities and regions. The following three research questions have guided the research presented in this report:

1. What is the role of local government in contemporary metropolitan governance arrangements in Australia, who are key actors and what collaborative models can be identified?
2. What inspiration might international examples of metropolitan governance offer for local government collaboration in Australia?
3. What further research is required on the existing and potential roles of local governments in shaping Australia's metropolitan regions?

1.3 Research approach

The research methodology was exploratory and comprised the following stages:

- a critical literature review of both international and Australian principles, models and examples of metropolitan governance and local government
- a desktop review and typology of the collaborative local government initiatives that currently support and promote metropolitan governance in the major city-regions in Australia
- the development of strategic themes for local government collaboration in Australian metropolitan governance, including scope for further research.
- To enable a breadth of input to these stages, while retaining a focus on existing research, an expert advisory team was established to assist in scoping the work. A series of expert workshops was conducted.

The key research questions, data sources and methods are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Research questions, data sources and methodology

Research question	Data sources	Methods
What is the role of local government in contemporary metropolitan governance arrangements in Australia, who are key actors and what collaborative models can be identified?	Review of previous literature and policy documents.	Synthesis of literature review to scope and frame report based on extant and experimental examples in Australian context.
What inspiration might international examples of metropolitan governance offer for local government collaboration in Australia?	Review of international literature.	Literature review framing international examples to inform consideration of Australian examples.
What further research is required on the existing and potential roles of local governments in shaping Australia's metropolitan regions?	Review of previous literature and policy documents.	Synthesis and workshop session to develop recommendations for a collaborative framework and for ongoing research.

Source: Authors' research.

1.3.1 Literature review

The literature review focused on metropolitan governance and the role of local government collaboration in both theory and practice. This included the history, context and debates around metropolitan governance in Australia, practical experiences with metropolitan governance structures both nationally and internationally, and the implications for developing a framework of collaborative models for metropolitan governance in Australia. An important area was also how notions of democracy, efficiency, technocracy, and politics in contemporary metropolitan governance affect consideration of the roles of different actors including local government. While the specific focus of the research was the Australian situation, relevant international institutional models and experiences, particularly under federal systems, were also considered. Collaboration, partnerships and networks in Australian local government constituted another part of the literature review.

1.3.2 Desktop review

For the desktop review, metropolitan governance structures in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and South East Queensland were examined and summarised. These examples were selected as they represent Australia's largest metropolitan cities and metropolitan regions. Although, it is recognised that the implications of the research can be relevant to other Australian cities and regions. The selection also represents a range of state jurisdictions and different governance contexts. The review encompassed content included in state and local government websites, analysed metropolitan strategies and other policies, and searched for further examples of local government collaborations. A framework table was used to keep the descriptions comparable and pinpoint differences between the states and their capital city regions. After an initial desktop review, the summaries were analysed and discussed with the expert group to ensure that all relevant collaborations, networks and strategies were covered, and to offer local context and knowledge.

1.3.3 Expert workshops

An expert reference group was established to guide the project, including a series of expert workshops. The first expert workshop was held in October 2019 and provided the basis for scoping the literature review. The workshop participants were provided with the project brief and proposal and an initial outline of the key themes and issues emerging in the literature regarding urban governance and local government with an Australian focus. The meeting structured the range of key themes and issues for further enquiry in the initial literature review. The second expert workshop was held in February 2020 and was used to discuss the findings of the literature and desktop reviews, identify any additional pathways of enquiry and to identify research gaps and pathways for further research. The expert panel included Professor Paul Burton (Griffith University), Adjunct Professor Bruce James (Griffith University), Dr Marcus Spiller (RMIT/SGS Economics and Planning), Professor Jago Dodson (RMIT University) and Professor Peter Phibbs (University of Sydney).

1.3.4 Research Contribution

This research makes three key contributions. First, the research brings together the rich veins of Australian and selected international literature and policy examples to focus on the nexus between metropolitan governance and the role of local government in the Australian context. Secondly, the report collates a thematic examination of collaborative metropolitan governance strategies across the five largest Australian metropolitan regions, identifying key actors, partnerships and collaborative arrangements. Finally, strategic principles for the role of local government in Australian metropolitan governance is developed, with recommendations for further research.

2. Local government in Australian metropolitan governance – a literature review

- Australian local government reforms have long sought solutions to fragmentary metropolitan governance.
- Australian local governments are an instrument of respective state governments, with little autonomy and no constitutional recognition. Local government reform in Australia has emphasised goals of efficiency, but recent reforms have often acted to reduce local differentiation and democratic intent has appeared secondary to this.
- Experiments in metropolitan governance involving local government have been varied and have included attempts at representation, collaboration and engagement between all tiers of government.
- The scope and possibilities of metropolitan scale approaches, including institutional reforms and cooperative models present opportunities to consider the efficient goals and solutions to complexity inherent in metropolitan government.
- However, issues of scale and scope in metropolitan governance remain contested and are critical in understanding how, and in what circumstances, local collaboration can, and should, be effectively operationalised.

This literature review focuses on three areas relevant to the Australian context:

- the roles of local government within the Australian system of federalism
- how the role of local government in Australia has emerged within the contested history of metropolitan governance
- the implications of the changing role of local governments (and local governance) for addressing emerging urban issues and crises in 21st century Australian cities at the metropolitan scale.

2.1 The role of local government in Australian federalism

Local governments are evidently closer to the specific contexts of their communities and the culture, geography, demography and preferences of their respective jurisdictions than higher tiers of government. Local governments also have access to a more accurate understanding of local preferences and conditions with different demands for types and levels of public service (Oates 1972; Oates 1999). What is unclear is how this knowledge and responsibility accommodates urban growth and change across jurisdictional borders in larger regions (Phares 2009). As Brown and Bruerton (2009: 48-50) observe in a context of resource constraints on the one hand and increasing functional connections in the urban regions 'it has fallen to [...] local government authorities to overcome capacity constraints to deliver for the cross-border communities as a whole'. This, they argue, has resulted 'in a range of policy and service areas, many not anticipated at federation, questions of cross-border equity and coordination continue to arise' (Brown and Bruerton 2009: 48-50).

Historically, Australian local government has played a limited role in governance at a metropolitan scale. Since the 19th century there has been a tendency towards sectorally-oriented and geographically fragmented approaches to governing Australian cities as a result of the 'colonial governments [being] for long periods after their foundation the only government in their territory' (Hirst 2001: 399). Just as current Australian constitutional arrangements offer no specific validity or defined purpose for local government, neither do state (or previous colonial) constitutions offer any substantive powers to the various forms of local administration that have emerged since that time. The only exception is various enabling legislation, which has typically allowed state ministers to limit, restructure and dismiss local government and its elected officials (Megarrity 2011).

The Australian Constitution does not mention local government, and past attempts at such recognition have failed (Aulich and Pietsch 2002). As a result, the powers, roles and responsibilities of local government continue to be determined by the state governments. Increasingly, 'reform' in the sector has been guided by an attempt to increase economic efficiencies (Dollery and Byrne 2008) through a centralisation and uniformity of practice and policy (Buxton, Goodman et al. 2016). Consequently, the major interaction between the Australian Government and local governments occurs through the provision of federal grants, usually mediated through state agenda. Although, in this regard, relations are more dynamic than long-standing constitutional arrangements might suggest. The efficiency and effectiveness of this style of multi-level governance agenda has been a key point of contention in Australia and in the literature on federalism more broadly, with implications for addressing challenges and opportunities at the metropolitan scale.

The literature on fiscal federalism draws attention to the principles and practices of multi-level systems and the role of decentralised governance, with an emphasis on expenditure and capacity for revenue-raising as integral to decision-making and accountability (Oates 1972; Oakerson 1999). Broadway and Shah (2009) highlight that the essence of federalism ought to be decentralisation. That is, each level of government holds some independent authority to make economic decisions related to expenditure, capital (including buildings and infrastructure), revenue-raising, redistribution of resources, the introduction of regulation, and pricing mechanisms to influence the achievement of aims and outcomes through the budget. When this revenue-raising and expenditure capacity is constrained or tightly focussed this impedes the achievement of objectives at this spatial scale.

In Australia, there is financial centralisation as the Australian Government collects the largest part of the tax income, which it then redistributes to the states. Similarly, states collect more taxes than local councils, whose rates only make up about four per cent of the tax raised by government overall (ALGA 2019). This leads to a mismatch of tasks and money available, and does not adhere to the principle of subsidiarity, despite constitutional intent.

Key to this is the limited capacity for legislative authority, as well as administrative authority, at the local government scale to address the mismatch in revenue sharing and expenditure. Disputes around revenue-raising capabilities and authority over expenditure in local government include the extent and method of sharing responsibility, and accountability for a range of essential public services to a community and geographic area.

In terms of local *governance* (rather than government), this extends to the formulation and execution of collective action at the local scale, including capacity to engage with the community, private and not-for-profit collective decision-making in the delivery of public services. Good local governance is not just about providing services but also the conditions of liveability for residents, including creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue and in supporting sustainable development and outcomes (Broadway and Shah 2009). Despite this, tendencies in local government reform in Australia remain heavily focussed on increasing fiscal efficiencies (see e.g. Dollery 2002 for a review of fiscal imbalance in Australian federalism).

For Weingast (2008: 279), first generation (early 20th century) Australian fiscal federalism ‘assumes that public decision makers are benevolent maximisers of the social welfare’ (Musgrave 1959; Oates 1972; Rubinfeld 1987). In comparison, second generation (since the 1970s) fiscal federalism builds on this, but assumes that ‘public officials have goals induced by political institutions that often diverge from maximising citizen welfare’ (Oates 2005; Garzarelli 2004). The focus consequently shifts to ‘how various institutions align – or fail to align – the incentives of political officials with those of citizens which is central to understanding differential federal performance’ (Weingast 2008: 280).

“A central government that is not committed to decentralization has numerous ways to undermine sub-national government performance, including inadequate revenue, constraints on sub-national policymaking and unfunded mandates, and threats to political officials who deviate from the central government’s policies” (Weingast 2008: 282).

The trade-offs between genuine decentralised decision-making and the achievement of local administrative outcomes, including through ‘utility-maximising’ entities operating in a constellation of incentives and constraints, depends largely on how expenditure and revenue are determined and allocated across the different financial and political institutions and layers of government – including whether local government has the real capacity to influence this process. Oates (1999: 1120) highlights that this involves ‘understanding which functions and instruments are best centralized and which are best placed in the sphere of decentralised levels of government’.

The challenges of fiscal federalism and emphasis on responsibility at various scales of administration and locality goes to the heart of the debates and practice around metropolitan governance in Australia. For example, Spiller (2018: 242) argued that “Local governments cannot do the job of metropolitan plan implementation [...], whether they work individually or collectively. This is because they stand for local communities. It is a fanciful aspiration that they can somehow lift their sights to the interests of the metropolitan area when they are obliged to prioritise local interests”. Spiller (2018: 242) further contends that “Metropolitan governments are necessary, but we need not think of them as competitors to state governments...While this is an ambitious reform agenda, it is not unrealistic. Australia has had, in the past, quasi-metropolitan governments”. However, the long-term experiences of Australian local government suggest shifting the scale and responsibility of this tier of government is a significant challenge.

2.2 The Australian experience of local government in metropolitan governance in historical perspective

Prior to federation, the primacy of metropolitan cities in Australia, and the tendency of the governments of each colony to maintain influence in decision-making for their growing cities has long been noted and remained a feature of Australian local administration. These have even been described as deliberate approaches to weakening the capacity and remit of municipal government in favour of centralised colonial parliaments and, subsequently, state parliaments (Biggs 1900; Fitzgerald 1918; Davison and Dunstan 2018). Notable consequences were the continued fragmentation of municipal districts throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Goode 2015), coupled with the formation of appointed boards and similar authorities to manage utilities, transport and housing at the metropolitan scale, often avoiding a role for local government in these.

The prevalence of small municipal areas, both within metropolitan cities and elsewhere, was considered a consequence of distance, of fragmented and changing responsibilities (especially, for example, the changes of rural road boards into municipal government) and of resistance to amalgamation even as locations became urban or suburban. Nonetheless, Davison and Dunstan (2018: 18) stress that this resistance was not driven by a popular desire for self-governing local communities. Indeed Troy (1995: 265) even suggests that the 'question of local government and its power never arose'.

By the early 20th century, such local government fragmentation was considered problematic in most Australian states. This caused a series of realised and aspirational approaches to local government rationalisation. However, the increased exercise in power that may have accompanied this was absent. Processes of local government amalgamation in Hobart (1907), Perth (1906) and Melbourne (1890-1920) suggest limited success during this period.

For example, the *Greater Perth Movement* from 1906 saw a period of consolidation but was ultimately unsuccessful in its goals (Goode 2015: 60). Even in the 1990s, the City of Perth was further split into smaller, local municipal areas, against the tide of amalgamations in most other cities. Megaritty (2011) identifies a specific resistance during Australian Federation negotiations to addressing any (national) constitutional role for local government, with this being seen as simply a colonial administrative matter. Notably, the attempts to amalgamate local government in South East Queensland resulted in the formation of the City of Brisbane in 1925, which remains Australia's largest local government by population, resource base, and by influence over a wide range of areas of public policy.

Beyond attempts at creating larger local governments through amalgamation, shifts in the approaches to Australian metropolitan governance were framed in stages, including the establishment of governance structures from 1890, as well as institutions with sectoral roles in utilities provision, housing and transport, amongst others. Examples included the Adelaide Municipal Tramways Trust (1906) and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. The latter was initially conceived to address water and sewerage management tasks, but its remit was subsequently expanded to a strategic urban planning role. This 'remained for many years the conservative alternative to the progressive reformers' call for a citizen- or ratepayer-elected Greater Melbourne Council' (Davison and Dunstan 2018: 21).

Later, investment in industrialisation and the modernist agenda for planning was led by state governments from the 1940s to the 1970s. This was an era of large metropolitan 'Mark One' plans (Alexander 2000) that were heavily state-directed projects, with ambitious reconstruction agendas in areas of industrial development and public housing. The foray of the Australian Government (1972-1975) into urban affairs occurred in later stages of this process.

Urban administration reform from the 1970s focused on twin processes of reducing state intervention and enhancing administrative coordination (often without taking local governments' views into consideration). These pervasive processes introduced models of rationalisation in local government roles, but also in their number and influence in jurisdictions including Victoria (Kortt and Wallace 2015), with implications for the conception of local government as an intrinsically democratic institution. Threads of reform and new roles coupled with a re-emergent interest in strategic spatial planning have emerged since 2000 (Searle and Bunker 2010a). This has included a set of policy and fiscal practices involving new inter-governmental relations and public-private sector engagement in urban management that are reshaping the role of government at the metropolitan scale.

While the metropolitan question has been debated since the late 19th century, only few metropolitan governments or governance institutions have been established in Australia, such as the metropolitan government in Brisbane in 1925, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works in 1891, and the Sydney City Commission in recent years. Apart from the Brisbane City Council, all of the earlier metropolitan scale arrangements have either been abolished or changed structurally. However, since the 1990s the debate started to regain strength and the metropolitan question is now once again high on the agenda. One reason for this is the understanding that global cities (or city-regions) will play an important role in the nation's economic competitiveness. In addition, it is recognised that land use, transport and infrastructure planning, as well as environmental and climate action can only be addressed efficiently at the metropolitan and regional scale.

Arguments for the need for metropolitan scale governance remain divided. However, the voices of scholars and advocacy groups requesting attention to this issue have increased in scope and volume over the last two decades (e.g. Tomlinson and Spiller 2018; Gleeson, Dodson et al. 2012; Armstrong, Davison et al. 2015; Dodson 2016; Committee for Melbourne 2020; Committee for Perth 2020). Some of these scholars and advocacy groups have a particular focus on metropolitan planning (such as Legacy, Gleeson et al. 2014; Whitzman and Ryan 2015) but many argue for comprehensive metropolitan governance across a range of policy issues.

Many scholars calling for metropolitan scale coordination in Australia have argued for a single metropolitan government structure, rather than networked governance structures (such as Tomlinson and Spiller 2018). Other scholars are less specific regarding the need for institutions and structure. Instead, they place the emphasis on policy-making that operates at the metropolitan level. There appears to be consensus, however, that the existing governance structures—in which state governments are effectively the only institution responsible for metropolitan governance—are not ideal and that there should be structures on the metropolitan level with some independence in intent and capacity. This reflects the experiences with recent practices of metropolitan governance, such as those in Greater Sydney as discussed below. In contrast, formalised and institutionalised metropolitan governance would likely not garner much political support from Australian states (Tomlinson 2018).

In summary, the extent of the role of local government in the 21st century Australian metropolitan reform agenda remains limited. Some of the benefits that better coordination at metropolitan scale may help to achieve include greater connectivity, resource sharing efficiencies, congruence of services, and harmonising of policies and legislation. The decentralisation of decision-making may 'localise' decisions but may also result in inter-jurisdictional (or intra-metropolitan) collaboration or competition. The literature suggests that outcomes can be variable. At the local government scale, there is typically neither the capacity nor influence to tackle metropolitan scale issues, forcing local governments to either compete or collaborate in the face of increasing challenges and scarce resources.

2.3 Valuing the role of local government in metropolitan governance

Local government as a means of representation and broader notion of democracy within metropolitan regions is raised through the literature addressing the conceptualisations of the objective metropolitan governance structures and the historical and political traditions underpinning these. A conundrum of legitimacy is central in this regard: questions of who 'speaks' for the city, as well as questions of whether subsidiarity is inherently preferable are a feature of this literature.

Conversely, the context of localisation within expanding city-regions reveals dilemmas for recognising local and place-based solutions to urban challenges. The dynamic notion of the metropolitan scale raises new logics of peripheralisation, particularly in the context of structural change in cities, with increasing centralisation of economic output and a spatial repatterning of work in Australian cities (Spiller and Schmahmann 2018; Choice and Butt 2020). For local government, this raises issues of roles, capacity and legitimacy within an increasingly complex milieu of governance forms and structures, and in the face of a long-standing reform agenda prioritising operational efficiencies.

Understanding the context, structure and operationalisation of metropolitan governance is important in the reconceptualisation of the role of local government from a deficit model to a collaborative partnerships agenda that is focused on innovation. This includes the key areas of efficiency gains, spill-over effects, and reduced fragmentation and complexity that underpin broader questions of democracy such as legitimacy, accountability, and authority. Each of these key areas will be outlined below.

2.3.1 Efficiency gains

One of the main reasons for establishing metropolitan institutions is potential efficiency gains, through providing joint services, utilising economies of scale, and avoiding wasteful competition. This particularly applies to services where economies of scale can be achieved, uncoordinated policies produce high costs and that have a 'naturally' regional characteristic, such as sewage disposal, waste management, transport and land use planning, and environmental policies (Zimmermann 2014; Cheyne 2018). This purpose is consistent with the broader efficiency agenda that has guided local government reform in Australia over several decades, and the disputed claims of savings through scale (Roesel 2017; Tran, Kortt et al. 2019).

An issue with achieving efficiency gains through a metropolitan model or level of government is that for different services, different boundaries are efficient. In addition, ongoing urban growth can dilute the gains in efficiency (Kübler 2005; Horak and Doyon 2018). Examples of operationalising efficiency gains exist, either in the form of metropolitan governments or of specific authorities. For example, the Auckland Council was created in 2010 to better coordinate strategic planning, metropolitan planning organisations in North America are engaged in metropolitan transport planning, and many metropolitan organisations have waste, land use planning and transport planning as their core tasks, including in well-documented examples such as Vancouver (Kadota 2010; Legacy and Stone 2019).

2.3.2 Spill-over effects

Spill-over effects have been cited widely as a crucial reason for metropolitan governance structures. These effects occur, for example, when the central municipality provides certain services that are used by residents from surrounding municipalities as well, without contributing to their costs. Examples of this are higher-order cultural facilities, such as theatres and museums, as well as public transport, and the externalities associated with job and income generation. Social welfare payments are also often unequally distributed, leading to higher costs for some municipalities and lower costs for others (Bassand and Kübler 2001).

Options to deal with spill-over effects are often assumed to be amalgamation, centralisation (i.e. shifting the tasks to higher order jurisdictions, such as the states), delegation (i.e. establishing special authorities) or reimbursement (either through benefiting municipalities or the state) (Bassand and Kübler 2001). In Australia, centralisation has been the default status for many areas, as often state governments provide the services rather than the municipalities. For example, the states are responsible for public transport, public housing and higher-order cultural facilities.

A counter-argument is that spill-over effects cannot be satisfactorily internalised through territorial reform and voluntary cooperation to achieve economies of scale is promoted instead (Frey and Eichenberger 2001). Voluntary cooperation between public authorities to meet the service needs of one jurisdiction alone may not be able to satisfy and endorse the horizontal cooperation between local authorities as a substitute for metropolitan government (Kübler 2005; Feiock 2004).

Elsewhere, some metropolitan regions have opted to create one fiscal structure so that all revenues, as well as costs, are shared, such as in 2001 in Hanover, Germany (Zimmerman 2017). The metropolitan governance structure most commonly advocated to achieve this is the establishment of metropolitan governments. However, spill-over effects can also be addressed with inter-governmental cooperation and revenue-sharing.

2.3.3 Complexity and fragmentation

Metropolitan areas are often characterised by a fragmentation and multiplicity of local jurisdictions dealing with planning and coordinating urban growth in their own areas but with a concomitant need 'to govern themselves, which stem from the strong interdependencies and externalities generated by urbanisation' (Storper 2014: 118). This fragmentation and the necessity of coordinating regional growth (and corresponding investments in infrastructure, housing, and so on) reinforces the need for integrated regional planning and metropolitan governance in order to avoid discontinuous and dispersed development and loss of valuable agricultural areas or open space to development.

The described fragmentation is often a focus for the debate on metropolitan governance structure (Kübler 2018; Storper 2014; Tomlinson 2018) and different metropolitan governance structures have been implemented to deal with this fragmentation, and achieve area-wide governance and policy implementation. Some commentators argue that the solution lies in institutional consolidation, such as the amalgamation of existing jurisdictions or through the creation of a metropolitan government (Friskin and Norris 2001; Brenner 2003). Others believe that informal cooperation can lead to better outcomes.

One issue that cannot be completely resolved but might be diminished is complexity in governance structure and process. That metropolitan policy topic areas and interdependencies are multi-faceted and fragmented only adds to this complexity (Storper 2014). Metropolitan governments are seen to reduce complexity by being one major player responsible for a number of metropolitan topic areas, thereby decreasing the number of players within metropolitan governance. Metropolitan network governance structures do this to a lesser extent, often still including several players in different topics. However, they can reduce complexity by having specific authorities or networks for specified topics (Zimmermann 2014). Both forms attempt to counteract existing complex structures of 'uncoordinated' arrangements consisting of public as well as non-public actors that have developed from years of ad hoc administrative reforms (Boschken 2017).

In Australia, complexity and fragmentation is dealt with differently in different states. In South East Queensland for example, a metropolitan planning strategy and infrastructure plan covers the overall metropolitan area and is implemented by the State Government. In Melbourne, a plethora of state authorities for different topics has been established, such as the Level Crossing Removal Authority, the Victorian Planning Authority, the Major Projects Authority and, most recently, the Suburban Rail Loop Authority. These authorities attempt to reduce complexity through the fragmentation of roles and task, with a risk that a synoptic view of inter-relationships is absent, or at least opaque.

2.3.4 Boundaries and territorial cover

The boundaries or territorial cover of a metropolitan area are one of the conundrums in metropolitan governance. First, it is difficult to define a metropolitan area because different interdependencies exist for different topic areas, and with this, different boundaries. For example, commuter relationships cover a different area than watersheds. Furthermore, most metropolitan areas expand so that areas not part of the metropolitan area today (regarding urban development and/or commuter flows) may become a part in the future. Increased mobility and a conceptualisation of the city as a potentially unbounded process (Brenner and Schmid 2011; Angelo 2017) each act to further confound attempts at unitary understandings of the geographical limits of the metropolitan governance project.

Different definitions (statistical, functional-economic and political-territorial) – and even understandings of what exactly 'metropolitan' is – are produced within these 'discursive fields', which in turn express competition (especially inter-governmental competition) between actors and their projects although the issues at stake may be different. (Albergo and Lefevre 2018: 154)

For metropolitan governance structures it is important that they cover a functional urban area to be effective (Kübler 2018). But as the functional area expands, or is broadly fluid in its conception, it becomes necessary to enlarge the boundaries of the governance structure, which can prove difficult. One example of this is Toronto, which had for many years a strong metropolitan government, but the city region continued to grow beyond the government's boundaries, leading to the same problems as in other fragmented metropolitan areas. It was suggested to extend the boundaries to cover the functional area again, but in the end, this did not occur due to the resistance of the suburbs and towns that would have been added to the government area and the prospect of a powerful metropolitan government (Frisken 2007). In the end, the local councils in the metropolitan area were amalgamated to form one large City of Toronto and the councils outside the boundaries of the metropolitan government area were left untouched. This produces the problem that there is no single governance structure for the metropolitan area (Horak and Doyon 2018; Savitch and Vogel 2009).

In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not define 'metropolitan areas'. The statistical entity of Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA) is designed to represent the functional or socio-economic context of the State and Territory capital cities and with this comes close to a definition of metropolitan areas. However, some cities, such as Geelong for Melbourne, might arguably be included in a metropolitan area definition, either now or in coming years, as commuter relationships exist. Similar boundaries exist for larger city-regions that are not capital cities, such as Newcastle-Maitland or the Gold Coast.

A drawback of the GCCSAs for understanding metropolitan governance is that their boundaries pass through Local Government Areas (LGAs), i.e. parts of the LGAs belong to the capital city, while other parts belong to the 'rest' of the respective state. For example, this is the case in Wollondilly, New South Wales; Murray, Western Australia; Barossa, South Australia; Lockyer Valley, Queensland; Mitchell Shire, Victoria; and Derwent Valley, Tasmania. If metropolitan governance structures are to be built upon local government coordination this provides a difficulty. As Burton (2017: 3) puts it: 'in the absence of any formal definition, we must deal with a varied mix of statistical, legal and political constructs, overlain with historical and cultural traditions'. Within the dynamic process of 'metropolitanisation' such coordination is rendered even more difficult.

2.3.5 Competitiveness

One of the reasons to introduce metropolitan governance structures is the competitiveness of city-regions on a national or international level. The renewed interest in metropolitan planning in Australia in the 1990s has been attributed to the objective of maintaining competitiveness, as has been interest in other countries around the world in metropolitan structures (McGuirk 2005; OECD 2001; Brenner 2002).

This can also be seen in the fact that '(a)ll of the states, except Tasmania, and the Northern Territory believe that their capital cities are, or should become, global cities' (Tomlinson 2018: 2). Similarly, Auckland Council was created with a view to positioning Auckland as global city (Cheyne 2018). As, due to the rise of the knowledge and service economy, competitiveness is more and more reliant on urban agglomeration and liveability, effective metropolitan governance and coordination is considered more and more important (Spiller and Schmahmann 2018; Savitch and Vogel 2009).

In Australia, one objective of metropolitan planning is to enhance place competitiveness and to secure a competitive quality of life (McGuirk 2005; Tomlinson 2018) while cooperative forms of politics are also emerging. For example this can be seen in the form of City Deals, voluntary cooperation between actors (e.g. Resilient Melbourne and a global Resilient Cities network) and public-private partnerships delivering specific infrastructure outcomes. This includes local government coordination on a metropolitan level. However, due to the states' pre-eminence in metropolitan governance, this coordination has not strongly evolved.

2.3.6 Participatory governance

The long-standing focus of metropolitan governance on efficiency and effectiveness has neglected community participation (Zimmermann 2014). The metropolitan governance debate has focused largely on the amalgamation of government has typically neglected the public as additional stakeholders. This coincides with shifts in local government influenced by pervasive models of new public management which have often sought to re-position the public as “client” or “customer”. Further stakeholders, even though emphasised as playing an important role in the ‘government to governance’ discussion, have been ‘discovered’ in the debate more recently.

The role of economic and business actors has been analysed in more detail with the advent of the so-called new regionalism approach in the 1990s, mainly because their appearance in governance structures was observed, e.g. in public-private partnerships (Savitch and Vogel 2009). Citizen participation and the democratic quality of different metropolitan governance structures were discovered even later and only started to be discussed in the second half of the 2000s (Zimmermann 2014; Kübler 2012; Kübler and Schwab 2007; Buser 2014; Airaksinen, Härkönen et al. 2013).

A reason given for the disregard of citizen participation and democratic action is the focus on efficiency (Heinelt and Kübler 2005). ‘(E)fficient metropolitan governance negatively hampers representative democracy on the local level as institutions of representative democracy are bypassed by opaque regional networks of public and private actors’ (Zimmermann 2014: 183). Zimmermann (2014: 196) even comes to the pessimistic view that ‘effectiveness comes at the expense of citizen participation’.

While this may be disputed, the argument that effectiveness in metropolitan governance is simpler without the complexity of participation is often evident in practice, as well as through research outcomes. Deas (2018: 93) describes the example of the Manchester region where ‘decisions about the shape and form of governance and the substance of policy have been driven by local political, government and business leaders, with little in the way of direct involvement by local residents’. However, there has been some change recently, as the mayor for Greater Manchester is now elected directly. Manchester is, in that sense, exemplary of other city-regions where more citizen participation has been introduced, mostly in the form of direct elections for certain roles in the metropolitan governance structure (see also discussion under *legitimacy* below).

In other city-regions, such as Montreal, members of the council that manages the metropolitan institution are appointed by the member municipalities but are not directly elected. Citizens can influence metropolitan decision-making only indirectly through elections on the provincial and local level (Haveri, Tolkki et al. 2019). This is similar to how metropolitan governance currently works in Australia, where the majority of metropolitan area decisions are made by state governments and citizens thus have an influence on metropolitan decision-making through state elections, or indirectly through the more limited influence exercised by local government.

Metropolitan government and networked governance structures can both involve citizen participation. Direct elections are typically easier to implement for metropolitan governments, but networked structures can involve appointments by members or other forms of citizen participation. Although, the literature raises issues of opaque and privileged access within such structures. Proponents of network-based structures argue that within such structures decisions are more likely to be made through discourses and negotiation rather than majority decisions and that interest groups and private actors are included in the regional decision-making process of representative institutions (Heinelt and Kübler 2005).

2.3.7 Legitimacy

Legitimacy is strongly connected to citizen participation. While it has been discussed in the metropolitan governance debate to some extent, it has been neglected in some installations of metropolitan governance or is at least seen as less central than the efficiency question. For example, often the members of such governance structures have been appointed by other government levels, rather than being directly elected. While this can help with depoliticising decisions made by these structures it can also undermine their legitimacy (Burton 2017).

Legitimacy refers to a context in which the 'decision-making power is accepted by those who are ruled' (Haveri, Tolkki et al. 2019: 584), i.e. governance structures and systems are accepted by citizens, political elites and other relevant institutions and stakeholders (Haveri, Tolkki et al. 2019; Kübler 2018). To achieve legitimacy, direct elections are not essential but helpful. Otherwise, the public may feel excluded and may even be suspicious about structures and decisions made (Burton 2017). Different systems of elections have been implemented, such as the direct election of the Mayor in Manchester or London; the direct election of the mayor, members of 21 local boards and members of the ward councillors on the governing body of Auckland Council; and the less direct influence on metropolitan governance through provincial elections in Montreal (Haveri, Tolkki et al. 2019; Deas 2018; Auckland Council 2019).

Legitimacy is often discussed as input and output legitimacy. Input refers to 'governance by the people' and a main component is the right and ability to vote in elections. However, there are also other opportunities for participation, such as engaging in public debate or through public expression. The essential question is how opportunity to use these forms of participation is distributed throughout communities and amongst stakeholders. Output refers to 'governance for the people' and one of its components is the capacity that governance structures have to produce outputs and policy outcomes and how effective those outcomes are. Output also refers to how governance structures respond to issues and come to decisions (Scharpf 1999; Haveri, Tolkki et al. 2019; Vetter and Remer-Bollow 2017).

For metropolitan governance structures this implies that acceptance by citizens and acceptance by existing administrative levels is crucial, because otherwise input or output legitimacy may not be given. Clearly, citizen participation and democratic legitimacy are two vital characteristics to be considered when establishing metropolitan governance structures. The democratic dilemma of informal networks of public and private actors organising metropolitan governance but bypassing democracy needs to be broached in discussions of metropolitan governance.

2.3.8 Authority and autonomy

Authority and autonomy are both strongly related to output legitimacy. Authority can be defined as the 'capacity to make legitimate and binding decisions for a collectivity' (Hooghe and Marks 2016, cited in Eaton, Faguet et al. 2019: 268). For metropolitan governments this means 'the extent to which they can and do independently make decisions and set rules that are binding on addressees in the metropolitan areas' (Kübler 2018: 64). Authority is mostly discussed in the context of governments rather than networked or more informal structures, as it is linked to more formal and binding structures, as well as to public accountability. However, networks or informal structures can also have capacity to make decisions (and certainly to influence them) for certain areas, as is often the case in policy themes that are central to metropolitan areas, such as planning, transport, housing, infrastructure, and so on. (Kübler 2018).

Naturally, the extent of authority differs in existing metropolitan areas, according to the political organisation. In Australia there is no metropolitan governance structure that has this authority – unless the state level is counted as metropolitan governance structure. 'The autonomy of metropolitan governments denotes the extent to which they can act independently from higher or lower state levels' (Kübler 2018: 64). This refers to the resources and administrative capacities, as well as the opportunity and authority to decide on relevant policy fields. Similar to authority, autonomy is mostly discussed in the context of metropolitan governments. Autonomy and authority are often viewed sceptically from existing administrative institutions and government levels, fearing to lose power.

For example, in Toronto, metropolitan government was not expanded but changed to a networked structure, because it was believed that a larger metropolitan government would be ‘a dangerously strong political counterweight to the provincial government’ (Horak and Doyon 2018: 113). Similarly, in Australia it is argued that state governments will not support autonomous metropolitan governments, as this would mean a loss of power in the most populous areas of each respective state. Nevertheless, there are demands for autonomous and democratic metropolitan governments in Australia (Tomlinson 2018) and metropolitan institutions with strong authority and autonomy exist, such as the Greater London Authority (Kübler 2018).

In summary, existing research describes the following important elements in the operationalisation of metropolitan governance structures: the possibilities of efficiency gains; how to deal with spill-over effects and spatial inequalities; how to deal with complexity and fragmentation; the question of boundaries and territorial cover; possibilities of supporting competitiveness; how to incorporate citizen participation; how to ensure legitimacy and to what extent (input and output); and the extent of authority and autonomy.

2.4 Conclusion

Metropolitan governance structures respond differently to these key aspects. Part of the response depends on the objective of introducing metropolitan governance structures and part of it depends on historical and political traditions (path dependency). Another difference lies in whether structures are developed bottom-up, or imposed from a higher level, such as the state or provincial level. Thus, which governance structure will develop or will be selected in a city-region will depend on the most pressing problems, the existing culture of cooperation, the democratic tradition, the desire to achieve change, and the will of the different relevant actors to cooperate and negotiate.

In the following section the role of local government in different metropolitan governance arrangements will be outlined through a desktop review of Australia’s five largest capital city regions.

3. Local government in Australian metropolitan governance – a desktop review through the lens of local government

- Models of Australian metropolitan governance are firmly shaped by the nature of state-local government relations, with an intermittent role for national-level ‘cities’ policy.
- Within Australia’s metropolitan regions there are varied approaches to organisational structures that seek to manage metropolitan issues of planning, transport and the like – levels of local government engagement in these issues also vary.
- Issues in cooperation and governance include structured, institutionalised examples, as well as less formal networks of governance, involving various tiers of government and various sectors of operation.
- The continuing processes of local government reform, and broader governance reform have resulted in structures of metropolitan governance that tend to professionalise, rather than democratise decision-making. Likewise, these have tended, in most cases, to result in a dilution of direct local government roles in new institutions of decision-making.

Australian metropolitan governance is firmly shaped by the nature of state-local government relations including revenue-sharing and expenditure responsibilities. There has been an intermittent role for the Australian Government with each of the other tiers more broadly in federal 'cities policy', which has been pursued to varying extents under successive governments. Past examples have included funding for transport infrastructure, social housing and industrial land development, however these programs have typically been short-lived. Within Australia's states and territories, different approaches to organisational structures are being trialled in the pursuit of better management of metropolitan issues, such as planning, urban growth and transport. These approaches range from structured, institutionalised arrangements, to informal networks of governance, involving various tiers of government and various sectors of operation.

The review of Australian metropolitan governance arrangements is undertaken from the perspective of local government. Given the scope and scale of each jurisdiction, the analysis is necessarily selective and contextual. The background to the urban governance 'problem' in each of the five metropolitan city-regions, the approach to metropolitan coordination and their challenges are discussed, and a series of open questions in relation to the stability, legitimacy and transferability of emerging models of practice is presented. Local government in metropolitan governance processes and institutional arrangements exists. However, the level of influence and the transparency of engagement is limited. Whilst a range of collaborative partnerships are evident, their effectiveness is varied and transient in the examples described below.

The two guiding aims for the desktop review were to:

Consider the context and practices of metropolitan governance as they have been developed and currently exist, especially in relation to issues of urban growth, strategic land use planning and transport infrastructure planning; and

1. Consider the ways in which local government is actually involved in these processes and issues, particularly how collaborative or cooperative approaches feature (or not), and what capacity and influence local governments have, particularly collectively, in these processes.
2. As a result of this, a critical question arises about the nature of collaboration or cooperation for local government jurisdictions in policy, strategy and action. As Emerson, Nabatchi et al. (2012) and Abbott (2013) describe these forms of effective collaboration work between and across tiers of government – as both horizontal and vertical actions. However, this raises questions of effectiveness and legitimacy and whether these structures engender collaboration. As described by Crommelin, Bunker et al. (2017) in relation to the shift to corporatised planning agencies, or as Hu (2019) contends regarding 'City Deals': top-down structures are unlikely to result in collaborative models of effective partnerships and are often highly unstable and transient if they respond only to the short-lived political imperatives of the states or the Australian Government.

The following summaries of Australian metropolitan arrangements include a contextual summary and table of key governance arrangements in each of the five capital city-regions: South East Queensland (SEQ), Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

3.1 South East Queensland

The SEQ metropolitan region comprises 12 local government authorities including Greater Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Noosa, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Toowoomba, Moreton Bay, Redland, and Logan. SEQ is home to 70 per cent of the Queensland population, which is expected to rise from 3.5 million to 5.5 million in the next 25 years. In 2008, the Queensland Government undertook local government reform across the state and amalgamated 157 councils into 72. In 2014, several of these were de-amalgamated, including Noosa from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in the SEQ region. SEQ includes some of Australia's largest (by population and area) urban local governments. They have responsibilities in many areas of infrastructure provision beyond those in other states.

In SEQ, local government has been involved in collaborative voluntary and later formal partnership processes to develop a strategic framework and vision for the SEQ metropolitan region. This conception of a regional approach was initiated by local government (Abbott 2013). The first voluntary partnership framework was the *SEQ Regional Framework for Growth Management* (1995), a non-statutory policy plan to address the sustainable development of SEQ that was endorsed by all three levels of government: federal, state and local. This included the establishment of the SEQ Regional Coordination Committee (RCC) to provide strategic advice to the Queensland Government and local government, and advocacy to the Australian Government.

After several iterations of a voluntary regional plan, a statutory SEQ regional plan was developed by the state-led Office for Urban Management (OUM) in conjunction with local government. This culminated in the first *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005-2026*, under which local governments were tasked with developing local growth management strategies (LGMS) that would meet the needs of the local area and the strategic aims of the Regional Plan. The SEQ Regional Plan also included regional regulation, such as the ‘Urban Footprint’ (a growth management boundary).

Additionally, the *SEQ Infrastructure Priority Plan* (SEQIPP) provided a blueprint for future state and major local government infrastructure. This was reviewed in 2009 with the removal of the LGMS in the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031*, to be replaced by sub-regional narratives. The latest iteration of the regional plan is the *2017 Shaping SEQ*, which provides a strategic vision for the next 50 years and has a much stronger emphasis on indigenous recognition, climate change action and biodiversity, in conjunction with the economy, growth, housing, transport and infrastructure development.

3.1.1 Current metropolitan governance arrangements

The Queensland Government’s Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning oversees whole-of-government urban and regional planning. It is also responsible for establishing the framework and overarching policy for land use planning, including the new *Planning Act 2016* (Planning Act), which in 2017 replaced the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* (previously the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*). State planning policy informs the development assessment process; articulates how development should occur in the region; provides the framework for the Queensland infrastructure program and priority development areas; and assigns community infrastructure designations powers over major projects.

Local government planning schemes are reviewed and approved by the Minister and must align with the strategic policies set out in regional plans and state planning policies. Planning schemes are developed primarily by local governments. Local governments manage development assessment processes and determine the majority of development application decisions.

Another significant state-based statutory authority is Seqwater which provides water storage, transport and treatment, water grid management and planning, catchment management and flood mitigation services in SEQ. Local councils then individually or together manage water distribution and sewerage – see Table 2.

Table 2: List of local councils’ role in water management

Utility	Local authorities
Urban Utilities	Brisbane, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim and Somerset
Unity Water	Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay
Logan Water	Logan Water
Gold Coast	Gold Coast Water and Sewerage
Redland City	Redland Water and Sewerage

Source: Authors’ research.

The Council of Mayors is a cooperative group of mayors from the SEQ councils who work together to advocate for and address strategic issues affecting the region. Two recent initiatives include the SEQ Food Trails and Resilient Rivers Initiative. They have been supportive of the prospects of a future SEQ city deal and joint bid to host the Olympic Games. As in other states, local councils are also members of the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and therefore represented in the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The involvement of the ALGA in National Cabinet discussions are expected to be significantly less than in COAG.

The 12 local governments in SEQ are diverse in terms of their socio-economic contexts and levels of biodiversity. They range from large metro authorities in their own right, such as Brisbane and the Gold Coast, to smaller peripheral councils such as the Lockyer Valley and Scenic Rim. Their funding is derived from rates and infrastructure levies around water supply and reticulation, sewage treatment, transport (for local roads and active transport), stormwater management, parks and land for community facilities, as well as funding from federal and state grants.

An independent regional organisation is Healthy Land and Water, which works with Traditional Owners, government, private industry, utilities and the community. The objective of the organisation is to restore waterways and landscapes, improve native habitats, manage weeds, protect native species and educate communities on the best ways to improve and protect the environment and support resilient regions.

3.1.2 Future directions

In February 2019, the Queensland Government and Council of Mayors released a joint pitch for a SEQ City Deal called 'Transforming SEQ' which is intended to form the basis of negotiations with the Australian Government. In March 2019, the Australian Government, Queensland Government and the Council of Mayors signed a Statement of Intent for the SEQ City Deal. Currently the details of the City Deal are under negotiation. Queensland had also announced that it will make a bid for the 2032 Olympic Games to be held in SEQ, and support from both tiers of government has been forthcoming. However, this bid has been put on hold as of May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1.3 Open questions

The SEQ experience of a Regional Organisation of Councils and Council of Mayors suggests some significant influence in shaping state government regional planning. However, the scale and scope of Queensland local government remains considerably greater than in other states, suggesting risks in assuming transferability of this model to other urban regions. The SEQ City Deal can have an important impact on metropolitan governance, local government collaboration and the development of the region. The bid for the 2032 Olympic Games could also have a vital influence on the economic and urban development of the region with all its (both positive and negative) consequences. Details of the City Deal and whether the Olympic Bid will go ahead are currently unknown.

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Table 3: Current metropolitan governance in SEQ

Metro examples			Roles of local government			
What are the institutional arrangements?	What are recent strategies?	Are there examples of ad hoc projects?	Does local government have a budget capacity to support collaborative projects?	Does local government have a decision-making role?	What examples are there of local government engaging in processes of metro governance?	Are there other examples of local government collaboration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning • Department of Transport and Main Roads/Translink • Department of Environment and Science • Economic Development Queensland • Queensland Urban Utilities, SEQwater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping SEQ – The SEQ Regional Plan and state planning policy 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEQ City Deal (future) • SEQ Olympic bid (future) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGIPs and Infrastructure Charge Resolutions e.g. water supply and sewage treatment, transport - local roads and active transport, stormwater management, parks, land for community facilities • Federal and state grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> • Power includes power to conduct joint government activities (1) A local government may exercise its powers by cooperating with 1 or more other local, State or Commonwealth governments to conduct a joint government activity. (2) A joint government activity includes providing a service, or operating a facility, that involves the other governments. Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Mayors SEQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEQ Food Trails • Resilient Rivers Initiative • Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) • Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)

Source: Queensland's Plannings Framework (<https://planning.dsdmip.qld.gov.au/>), Local Government Association of Queensland (<https://www.lgaq.asn.au/>), Shaping SEQ (<https://shapingseq.com.au/>), SEQ Water (<https://www.seqwater.com.au/>).

3.2 Greater Adelaide

Within the state of South Australia, itself with around 1.7 million inhabitants, Greater Adelaide is the dominant conurbation with a population of around 1.3 million. In comparison to other mainland Australian state capital cities, Greater Adelaide has the smallest population and the lowest rate of population growth.

The metropolitan region is characterised by low density development and high levels of car use, which together with a weak economy result in significant planning challenges. Metropolitan planning in South Australia has always been a task for its state government and has consequently reflected the political priorities of successive governments. In recent years, this has resulted in a dominant pro-growth discourse, a weakening of strategic planning policies and a considerable reduction of local councils' involvement in strategic policy-making. Given a lower population growth rate than in other states and a dominant role for the state government in planning, there have been fewer opportunities for local governments to get involved in the strategic decisions on infrastructure needs and changing urban morphology.

In terms of local land use planning, the South Australian Government and its administration has always played an important role, notably through the design and implementation of major infrastructure projects and the designation of large areas for urban expansion and (more recently) urban renewal. In recent years, the role of the South Australian Government in local planning matters has become significantly more prominent, with tasks becoming increasingly centralised. This has resulted in a gradual erosion of the role of local councils in planning policy and development assessment since 1994, which is progressing further due to the major reform of the planning system currently being implemented (Kellet 2014; Leadbeter 2019).

The new *Planning Development and Infrastructure (PDI) Act 2016* (Government of South Australia 2016), which is now the main legal framework for urban and regional planning in South Australia, has prompted a further weakening of local councils' involvement in planning policy and development assessment. This manifests through the powerful state planning bodies and new planning instruments and processes as part of a further centralisation of powers at state level (Leadbeter 2019; Hamnett and Kellet 2018).

3.2.1 Current metropolitan governance arrangements

Under the previous *Development Act 1993*, the Greater Adelaide metropolitan planning region was defined as consisting of 15 local government authorities. The recent *Planning Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* is the basis for the ongoing major planning reform in South Australia. It has broadened the definition of the metropolitan region to now comprise 19 local councils. In spite of the rhetoric regarding urban infill development, the expanded planning region presents a considerable weakening of the long-standing urban growth boundary for Greater Adelaide and will likely result in further release of greenfield sites for urban expansion.

There are no dedicated metropolitan governance arrangements for Greater Adelaide, and strategic planning at this scale (including the preparation of the metropolitan strategy) is the task of the state government administration. Until August 2020 this was the South Australian Government's Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI), with transport and infrastructure now administered by the Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) and urban and regional planning added to the portfolio of the Deputy Premier.

Local government coordination is organised through the Local Government Association for South Australia (LGASA) and its 68 local councils' members across the state that, through the LGASA, are also members of ALGA. In October 2018 two new bodies were formally established through the LGA Constitution, namely the South Australian Region Organisation of Councils (SAROC), which has 47 members, and the Greater Adelaide Region Organisation of Councils (GAROC), which has 19 members (i.e. the metropolitan councils).

GAROC is a forum for a representative small group of the mayors of the 19 metropolitan councils who serve two-year terms on GAROC. GAROC's strategic objectives are related to increasing the influence of metropolitan councils on matters of relevance to the Greater Adelaide Region. GAROC published a strategic plan for 2019-2023 (LGASA 2019a) that sets out three strategic themes, namely:

1. Built environment and planning
2. Economic development and jobs
3. Best practice and continuous improvement

GAROC's strategic plan is supported by an Annual Business Plan that sets out the allocation of the yearly budget of \$100,000 to identified actions under the three strategic themes. This modest budget prevents any possibility for implementing joint 'physical' projects (which continue to be mostly funded by the state). In the Business Plan 2019-2020 the main emphasis of proposed actions is therefore on advocacy to the South Australian Government in relation to 'quality planning and design standards', on identifying best practices, conducting surveys, and on establishing a benchmarking framework on local councils' performance in relation to expenditure (LGASA 2019b).

Local government coordination in South Australia is thus organised vertically (advocacy to the South Australian and Australian Government) and horizontally (capacity-building of local councils, best practice identification, benchmarking, and so on). However, the mechanisms for coordination are comparatively weak and there is no requirement for higher-level authorities to take local views into consideration in policy- and decision-making. In terms of planning advocacy, the emphasis during the first year of GAROC has been to present a coordinated position to the South Australian Government in relation to infill, heritage and design quality in the context of South Australian planning reform and the current consultation on the 'Planning and Design Code'.

In addition to the state government responsible for preparing strategic planning policy for SA's planning regions, including a Greater Metropolitan Adelaide Strategy, other policy sectors have proposed other regional delineations which don't always match the boundaries of the planning regions and therefore potentially presenting challenges for sectoral policy coordination. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions (DPIR) has developed seven regional economic development strategies, including one for Greater Adelaide. SA's Department for Environment and Water will be responsible for implementing the recent *Landscape South Australia Act* (2019). The legislation foresees the establishment of nine 'landscape boards', with the one for 'Green Adelaide' covering 17 local councils (and therefore smaller than the planning and RDA regions).

3.2.2 Future directions

A new metropolitan regional planning strategy for the enlarged Greater Adelaide region of now 19 councils will be prepared under the PDI Act. This new strategy will replace the existing metropolitan strategy of the 30-year plan for Greater Adelaide (Government of South Australia 2010) and its 2017 update (Government of South Australia 2017) (both of which were prepared under the *Development Act 1993*). Preparations for the new metropolitan planning strategy by the South Australian Government were expected to commence in late 2020, but might be further delayed due to the resignation of the planning minister in July 2020.

The PDI Act has also resulted in significant changes to development planning, and a centralisation of responsibilities to the state level. The councils' individual development plans are currently being replaced by a 'Planning and Design Code' for the entire state, which is prepared and maintained by the South Australian Government. The Planning and Design Code will introduce a state-wide set of universal planning rules for all of South Australia, with the intention that this will improve the consistency of all development assessments and decisions across council boundaries.

While this will likely achieve some of the central objectives for planning reform in terms of accelerating decision-making and facilitating economic investments, it also means that the role of local councils in planning decisions in their jurisdictions will be considerably curtailed. In future, local councils will have no special status to initiate amendments to the Planning and Design Code as they had for their Development Plans, and instead will only be able to make proposals to the minister to suggest changes (Leadbeter 2019). It has been widely acknowledged that the legislative changes will also significantly increase the influence of private sector developers in the planning process, and that there will be fewer opportunities for community engagement during the development assessment process in the new planning system (Leadbeter 2019).

The *Local Government Act 1999* was put in place following significant council amalgamations in the late 1990s that created the current 68 local councils in South Australia. Although the 68 councils are small in terms of population and (especially the metropolitan councils) also land size (especially in comparison to SEQ), no major reform of local council boundaries and amalgamations is currently foreseen.

However, the South Australian Government has introduced a *Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Bill 2020* into Parliament on 17 June 2020. The bill includes four key reform areas for local government:

- stronger council member capacity and better conduct
- lower costs and enhanced financial accountability
- efficient and transparent local government representation
- simpler regulation.

In spite of the rhetoric around capacity-building, the discussion paper primarily discusses council members' behaviour, and is in line with the current government approach of reducing 'red tape' and 'doing less with more'.

Another relevant driver for metropolitan scale coordination comes from the area of natural resource management. The *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*, which came into force on 1 July 2020, identifies eight new regional Landscape South Australia boards that will work in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to administer the new Act. A new entity of metropolitan 'Green Adelaide' is defined, which is intended to bring an integrated approach to managing the urban environment of the 17 most centrally located local councils.

In terms of vertical governance, in March 2019 a City Deal was signed between the Australian Government, the South Australian Government and the City of Adelaide. The objective of the City Deal is to deliver projects and initiatives that support businesses and jobs, help grow Adelaide's population, and build on arts and culture. An implementation plan has been released in November 2019, and work on a number of significant urban renewal projects is currently underway, primarily centring on 'Lot Fourteen', the former site of the Royal Adelaide Hospital in the CBD.

3.2.3 Open questions

The past years have seen many, and partly far-reaching, reform proposals for urban and regional planning, natural resource management, and local government. The definition of 'Greater Adelaide' varies depending on the sector policy's objectives, and consequently there appears to be little consensus about the exact extent of the urban region. There is no dedicated metropolitan governance arrangement, and state departments remain the dominant players with – at least for planning – a declining role in policy making and development assessment. The general trend for urban and regional planning is one of further centralisation of responsibilities to the state government and a reduction of the influence of local councils in planning matters for their own territories, which consequently limits possibilities for local government driven coordination between authorities at metropolitan scale.

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Table 4: Current metropolitan governance in metropolitan Adelaide

Metro examples			Roles of local government			
What are the institutional arrangements?	What are recent strategies?	Are there examples of ad hoc projects?	Does local government have a budget capacity to support collaborative projects?	Does local government have a decision-making role?	What examples are there of local government engaging in processes of metro governance?	Are there other examples of local government collaboration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metropolitan scale coordination is the responsibility of state government, with different definitions of the 'Greater Adelaide' regions being used by key sector departments such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (until August 2020, responsibilities are now divided between Department for Transport and Infrastructure, and (for planning) the Office of the Vice-Premier); Department of Primary Industries and Regions; Department for Environment and Water Regional Development Australia (RDA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metropolitan spatial strategy '30-Year for Greater Adelaide' (2010) and 'Update to the 30-year plan' (2017) prepared by SA government and soon to be replaced by a new metropolitan strategy prepared under the <i>PDI Act 2016</i> RDA Adelaide Regional Plan Edition Six 2016-2019, with Edition 7 currently in preparation Eight regional landscape boards, including one for 'Green Adelaide', under the <i>Landscape SA Act 2020</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adelaide City Deal 2019-2029 Major urban renewal projects (Bowden, Tonsley etc.) are coordinated by SA government agency Renewal SA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently established Greater Adelaide Region Organisation of Councils (GAROC) has an annual budget of ca. \$100,000 to support advocacy, training and capacity-building Other initiatives and projects are supported by individual councils (often requiring applications for state or federal funding) Sectoral grants e.g.: Under the new <i>Landscape SA Act</i> the State government's 'Greener Neighbourhood Grants Program' is providing up to \$2 million funding over 4 years for metropolitan councils to help them achieve spatial-environmental objectives Federal and state grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-making role in urban planning and development assessment has been limited through the provisions of the PDI Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 'Greater Adelaide Region Organisation of Councils' (GAROC) Committee was formally established through the LGA Constitution in October 2018 but operates with a very limited budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (cooperation outside of LGA and GAROC is done around specific initiatives and projects) Local Government Association of SA Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)

Sources: LGASA (2019a; 2019b); Leadbeter 2019; Regional Development South Australia (2020); DEW (2020a; 2020b); South Australian Productivity Commission (2020), DPTI (2019), Government of South Australia (2010; 2017); and the following websites: www.dpti.sa.gov.au/; pir.sa.gov.au/; www.regionaldevelopmentsa.com.au/; www.environment.sa.gov.au/; <https://www.rdaadelaide.com.au/>; <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/city-deals/adelaide/>; <https://renewalsa.sa.gov.au/>.

3.3 Greater Melbourne

Since the 1980s, there has been a steady increase in the degree of concentration of land use planning and decision-making powers for the metropolitan region, and other areas within Victorian. Successive Victorian state governments have developed metropolitan strategies, the last three being the 2002 *Melbourne 2030 – Planning for Sustainable Growth*, the 2014 *Plan Melbourne*, and the current *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*.

Before 1985, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) was a statutory authority with planning powers for the metropolitan area. It was comprised of representatives of local councils and levied its own rates. While there are still calls to re-establish a similar agency, many believe that this will not happen because the MMBW was perceived by the Victorian Government as being too powerful and independent. The amalgamation and reduction of local councils in the Melbourne metropolitan area from 57 to 31 in the 1990s was also influential for metropolitan governance in Melbourne. This complete restructure emphasised the constitutionally dependant nature of local councils.

Metropolitan challenges include pressures from population growth, infrastructure development, economic development and liveability and sustainability. Population growth has been strong for the last 20 years—much stronger than anticipated. From 2012 to 2018, Melbourne has added between 90,000 to 125,000 people each year to its overall population. It is estimated that Melbourne has over five million residents, compared to 3.4 million in 2001.

Since the 1990s, Melbourne's economy has transitioned from manufacturing to service-based industries and had an annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 3.8 per cent from 2013 to 2018. This shift in economic structure was accompanied by major urban development projects, including the regeneration of previous industrial sites of the Southbank and Docklands, and major transport infrastructure investments such as the Western Ring Road, CityLink and EastLink, which have all improved connectivity and suggest agglomeration economies. However, this growth has also led to capacity restraints on public transport and the road network. It is open to debate whether this economic growth is mainly due to population growth, stimulating the property, and the construction and finance sectors, rather than a more sustainable economic growth trajectory.

3.3.1 Current metropolitan governance arrangements

There is no explicit metropolitan governance structure in Melbourne or Victoria, but there are several structures and strategies related to metropolitan governance. First of all, there is the state's metropolitan strategy *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, which sets out a vision for the development of the metropolitan area. This plan was developed by the Victorian Government, with some community, industry and local government engagement and consultation. While it is not a legally binding plan, it provides the framework and direction for the Victorian Government and its departments and agencies in their work, particularly through the complementary five-year implementation plan. It is not clear to what extent local government has been involved in developing the implementation plan.

Additionally, there are *Five-Year Plans for Jobs, Services and Infrastructure* for six metropolitan sub-regions, which are identified in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. Each of the five-year plans covers a sub-set of the metropolitan councils and was prepared with the engagement of local councils and communities, through so-called 'Metropolitan Partnerships'.

Metropolitan Partnerships are advisory groups tasked with identifying priorities for jobs, services and infrastructure across their region and advising the Victorian Government on these priorities annually. They are comprised of eight community and business representatives, the CEO of each local government in the respective region, and a Deputy Secretary from the Victorian Government. They work with the local community through public engagement activities and engagement with local groups, networks and organisations. Metropolitan Partnerships will also advise on land use framework plans for their regions, which were announced in the implementation plan associated with *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. These implementation plans will include strategies for population growth, jobs, housing, infrastructure, major transport improvements, open space and urban forests.

A further advisory group is the Metropolitan Development Advisory Panel (MDAP). The MDAP provides advice on an approach to metropolitan development and issues related to suburban development. This includes the implementation of *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* and the outcomes of the Metropolitan Partnership process. MDAP was established in December 2017 and its members include the six Chairs of the Metropolitan Partnerships, plus four members appointed by the Minister for Planning with relevant skills and experience (from outside of government).

The *Five-Year Plans for Jobs, Services and Infrastructure Plans*, Metropolitan Partnerships and MDAP are coordinated by the Office for Suburban Development (OSD), which is part of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR). The Victorian Government's Suburban Development Statement and *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* guide these structures and plans.

There are several other institutions responsible for the implementation of the metropolitan strategy and metropolitan governance-related tasks. These institutions include the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), which oversees the implementation plan, as well as the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and further state departments and agencies. The VPA is an interesting institution with the metropolitan governance discussion; it has progressed from the Growth Areas Authority, to the Metropolitan Planning Authority to the Victorian Planning Authority. Some metropolitan players hope that it could play a stronger metropolitan planning role in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as local governments. However, it is mostly an implementing agency with strategic planning undertaken by DELWP.

In relation to local government there is also Local Government Victoria (LGV), which sits within DELWP. LGV's task is to support and regulate councils and provide advice to DELWP and the Minister for Local Government. LGV oversees legislation and works with councils to improve business and governance practices. It is also involved in an implementation plan for the recently announced *Local Government Bill 2019*. This Bill suggests reforms to the *Local Government Act 1989*, a legislative framework to support councils to provide essential infrastructure and services. Suggestions for reform include more freedom for councils to work with other councils, government agencies, community organisations and the private sector, allowing for greater council collaboration (e.g. joint service delivery) and joint meetings of councils.

Two organisations represent local governments in Victoria: The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), a statutory association of local governments, and the non-institutionalised, voluntary Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA). Both are advocacy groups and organisations for the whole state.

There is a range of sub-regional local government cooperation structures, including the Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP) Councils, the South-East Melbourne Group of Councils (SEM), Lead West and the Interface Councils. These are coalitions of local governments, mostly undertaking advocacy work towards Victorian Government but also working together and developing joint strategies. Some of them have also members or associate members outside of government.

A cooperative local government structure at the metropolitan level is the Metropolitan Transport Forum (MTF), an advocacy group. Of Melbourne's 31 councils, 25 are members of MTF, along with associate members representing community, environment and local government organisations and transport companies. MTF seeks to influence transport policy and project implementation in the broader metropolitan interest. It aims to provide a forum for debate, research and policy development to promote effective, efficient and equitable transport in metropolitan Melbourne.

Other organisations outside of state government connected to metropolitan governance are 'Resilient Melbourne' and the 'Committee for Melbourne'. Commenced in 2014, Resilient Melbourne is a project (and the name of its strategy) that is funded through the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) initiative. While the City of Melbourne coordinates the project through hosting the Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) and providing the project team and additional investment, the project is a metropolitan and collaborative project with input and support from local councils, organisations and community groups across Melbourne. The resilience strategy, released in 2016, represents a joint project of the metropolitan Melbourne Councils, as well as Melbourne's academic, business and community sectors, and the Victorian Government. Resilience Melbourne can be seen as "an 'experiment' towards a collective framework for local government across the metropolitan region" (Davidson and Gleeson 2018: 233).

The Committee for Melbourne is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation, comprising of over 150 organisations from the business, academic and community sector, all located in Melbourne. It was founded in the 1980s to support the economy and Melbourne's status as an international city. The Committee has engaged in projects, such as the Docklands redevelopment, privatisation of Melbourne Airport, progressing medical technology through the BioMelbourne Network, and the Western Bypass and CityLink projects. Its main focus is economic development.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Melbourne was created in 2018 as an amalgamation of four existing RDA groups (Western, Northern, Eastern and South Melbourne). RDA comprises business leaders and industry experts with the objective of accelerating Melbourne's economic development. It advocates and delivers investment for Melbourne's suburbs, and supports economic development through job creation, partnerships and priority setting.

3.3.2 Future directions

The Metropolitan Partnerships and associated five-year plans seem to show a direction towards more cooperation between the Victorian Government and local government (and the community) for metropolitan sub-regions and their development. However, it is currently unclear what role and impact these partnerships and plans will really have and whether they will lead to a stronger sub-regional thinking or better coordination and cooperation within state government agencies.

The *Local Government Bill 2019* will make it easier for local councils to collaborate and to organise joint service delivery. However, it appears unlikely that this will happen on a metropolitan level. The Victorian Government is focused more strongly on the implementation of *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* than it was on previous metropolitan plans. This means that the plan's content impacts metropolitan development. The growth pressures will affect Melbourne for years to come, as will the challenge of climate change. As such, the responses to these metropolitan challenges are crucial for Melbourne's and Victoria's development, as well as the survival of the government of the day.

Although there is a strong focus on *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* in government, projects have been announced that are not mentioned in the plan, but will have an impact on metropolitan development, such as the Suburban Rail Loop. It remains to be seen how this project develops and whether it will be added to an update of the metropolitan plan. Overall, it seems that it is unlikely that a governance structure for the whole metropolitan area in which local governments have a say will be established soon. Nevertheless, the sub-regional structures might provide a first step.

3.3.3 Open questions

It is unclear how influential the Metropolitan Partnerships, the five-year plans and the OSD with its mandate to initiate cooperation within state government really are. Questions include how influential they are for planning for the overall metropolitan area, and what the actual role of local governments is in these plans.

Table 5: Current metropolitan governance in metropolitan Melbourne

Metro examples			Roles of local government			
What area the institutional arrangements?	What are recent and current strategies?	Are there examples of ad hoc projects?	Does local government have a budget capacity to support collaborative projects?	Does local government have a decision-making role?	What examples are there of local government engaging in processes of metro governance?	Are there other examples of local government collaboration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) • Office for Suburban Development (OSD) • Metropolitan Development Advisory Panel (MDAP) • Metropolitan Partnerships • Victorian Planning Authority • Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) • Local Government Victoria • Local Government Act • Resilient Melbourne Committee for Melbourne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plan Melbourne 2017-2050</i> • 5-Year Plans for Jobs, Services and Infrastructure for six metropolitan regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated transport framework for the West • 20 min city pilot projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly state government funds that local government can make suggestions to or not • Federal grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A role in planning approvals • See also engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in Metropolitan Partnerships • Involvement in developing 5-Year plans • Involvement in other implementation actions for <i>Plan Melbourne 2017-2050</i> (but more individual; ad hoc) • Involvement in development of <i>Plan Melbourne 2017-2050</i> • Involvement in Resilient Melbourne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilient Melbourne • Regional Organisations of councils, e.g. Interface councils, Metropolitan Transport Forum, IMAP etc. • Committee for Melbourne • Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) • Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)

Sources: Office for Suburban Development (2020); Local Government Victoria (2020); Committee for Melbourne (2020); Resilient Melbourne (2020); MTF (2020); Plan Melbourne 2017-2050.

3.4 Perth Summary

Metropolitan Perth comprises 32 local governments, encompassing areas that vary enormously in size; from fewer than 2,000 residents to those in excess of 100,000 residents. The Perth and Peel region, which includes Metropolitan Perth and the urbanising peri-urban region to the south, as grown from approximately 1 million residents to 2 million in the last 30 years and is forecasted to grow to 3.5-4 million people by 2050. The population growth has led to an urban footprint along a 170km coastline. Mining, construction and professional, scientific and technical services are the dominant industry sectors in Perth and Peel (RDA Perth 2016).

Perth had a Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority from 1959 to 1985, which prepared and implemented several strategic metropolitan plans. Under the *Western Australian Planning Commission Act 1994*, Regional Planning Schemes were developed, such as the Peel Region Planning Scheme (2003). The regional approach was retained in the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

3.4.1 Current metropolitan governance arrangements

Metropolitan scale planning and infrastructure development is undertaken by the Western Australia Government. Recent metropolitan plans (*Perth and Peel @ 3.5 million*, 2015) have been produced by state government planning agencies and resulted in sub-regional targets for housing and other planning outcomes. The plan requires targets for infill and greenfield housing (in particular) to be provided in each planning sub-region and each local government area. The Peel Region Planning Scheme and the Metropolitan Regional Planning Scheme require local governments to prepare local schemes that are consistent with the regional scheme.

While there is a tradition and legislative capacity for collaborative regional organisations of councils in Western Australia, these are not operating at a metropolitan scale. Two voluntary (local government) sub-regional organisations exist: Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) and South West Group. However, these organisations do not focus strongly on transport or planning issues. Rather, the regional grouping is typically focussed on offering scale and efficiencies in service delivery in regional and rural areas, and project-specific activities in Perth.

The Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) currently prepares state and regional strategic land use plans and state and regional planning policies, including advice to local government on their implementation progress. The Commission (and various sub-committees) include local government representation, along with representation from state government departments and nominated planning experts. Technical assistance to the WAPC is provided by the Western Australia Government's Ministry of Planning, Land and Heritage.

Western Australia uses Development Assessment Panels for large projects, which remove planning approval from local councils. There are six of these in metropolitan Perth (the City of Perth has a single member panel, while others are joint panels). The thresholds for panel assessment are based on development costs, but panel assessment can be requested also for proposals with more limited budgets. Panels include both elected councillors, as well as appointed members. They offer a form of regional perspective, but the 'collaborative' nature of these is less clear, given the limitations to local government.

Within the metropolitan planning process, DevelopmentWA (formed via a merger of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and the government development agency LandCorp) manages key development sites including, but not limited to, key public land areas that typically include urban renewal precincts. DevelopmentWA has a broad structure and reports to the Minister for Lands. There is limited local government involvement in the various local and regional land redevelopment committees that have planning powers in the designated precincts.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) developed the Perth Regional Plan *Driving Change: Perth and Peel Economic Development Strategy and Infrastructure Priority Plan*, which was published in 2016. RDA Perth was established in 2012 and is involved in several project across the Perth region, such as regional marketing and rural diversification.

3.4.2 Future directions

DevelopmentWA will assume planning authority for some redevelopment areas, such as the METRONET East Redevelopment area.

3.4.3 Open questions

The ‘collaborative’ nature (and potential) of Development Assessment Panels is unclear, given the limitations to local government (as an entity) participating directly, rather than as representative alongside Western Australia Government nominees. The model suggests scope for greater and more coordinated influence. However, in practice, it appears to simply remove large or contentious development projects from local oversight.

Table 6: Current metropolitan governance in Greater Perth

Metro Examples			Roles of local government			
What are the institutional arrangements?	What are recent and current Strategies?	Are there examples of ad hoc projects?	Does local government have a budget capacity to support collaborative projects?	Does local government have a decision-making role?	What examples are there of local government engaging in processes of metro governance?	Are there other examples of local government collaboration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage • Western Australian Planning Commission • (Joint) Development Assessment Panels • Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (part of Development WA) • Local Government • Regional Organisations of Councils (some) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perth and Peel @ 3.5million • Sub-regional planning frameworks and development targets • RDA Driving Change: Perth and Peel Economic Development Strategy and Infrastructure Priority Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRA renewal sites • METRONET TOD redevelopment sites • Planning Investigation Areas (Perth and Peel plan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government membership of WAPC and JDAPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A role in planning approvals (below JDAC threshold) and consistent with Metro/ Sub-regional targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representational roles in WAPC and other development committees • Negotiating roles in metropolitan and sub-regional plans and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Organisations of Councils (ROC) involvement in projects including urban greening, infrastructure and other examples • WALGA as representative body

Source: Department of Planning Lands and Heritage (<https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/perth-and-peel-@-3-5-million>), METRONET (<https://www.metronet.wa.gov.au/>), Western Australia Local Government Australia (<https://walga.asn.au/>).

3.5 Greater Sydney

Like Melbourne, Sydney has seen an increase in the concentration of metropolitan planning over its post-World War II history. Sydney has had 10 major metropolitan planning strategies over that period. The implementation arrangements for these strategies have been quite different in recent years, with a greater focus on implementing the plan, facilitated by recent changes in governance arrangements. The current plan, *2018 – A Metropolis of Three Cities* was the first created by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) under the new governance arrangements (see below).

A clear trend over time has been an attempt to better harmonise the strategic planning documents with the plans of the major infrastructure agencies, especially transport agencies. In earlier years, transport plans and strategies that appeared in metropolitan plans were often ignored by other agencies, who were undertaking duplicate transport planning operations inside their own agencies with little regard for the metropolitan planning strategy.

In recent years, Sydney (and other part of New South Wales) has experienced (a perhaps incomplete) amalgamation of local governments. Despite New South Wales Government intent, in some areas of Sydney and New South Wales there has been strong resistance from some councils to the process of amalgamation, demonstrated through legal challenges and community unrest. The latest round of amalgamations was completed in 2016, resulting in a reduction from 41 to 24 local governments in the Greater Sydney region.

As Australia's first global city, Sydney has faced the challenges of strong population growth for many years, with the additional challenge of the Central Business District (CBD) and its historical heart being located on the far eastern side of the city. Whilst recent growth rates have been exceeded by Melbourne, its growth rate of between 1.5 and 2 per cent is very high by global city standards and has been generating significant pressures in the housing market and the transport system.

For example, Sydney had already exceeded its 2030 forecasts for public transport use by 2019. The ongoing problem for Sydney is connecting its growing population with jobs. The western part of the city is expected to absorb the majority of its population growth, whilst many of the employment opportunities are located in the eastern part of the city. The major planning response has been an attempt to build Parramatta into a genuine second economic centre to complement Sydney's CBD.

Like Melbourne, Sydney has also seen its economy transformed from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, with the old inner-city manufacturing core transformed into high density housing in recent years. The outer manufacturing ring has seen factories replaced by logistics operations with the accompanying decrease in employment densities. There has been a surge in transportation infrastructure in recent years but continuing strong growth suggests that this surge will need to be continued to manage the city's increasing transport challenges.

3.5.1 Current metropolitan governance arrangements

The most significant change in metropolitan governance in Sydney in recent years has been the creation of the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC), which has been an attempt to better coordinate metropolitan urban strategy and plan implementation. The GSC was created by a dedicated *Greater Sydney Commission Act* (2016), which in 2018 was amended to strengthen the powers of the GSC. A number of Commissioners have been appointed by the New South Wales Government, including the Chief Commissioner (currently Lucy Turnbull), an Economic Commissioner, a Social Commissioner and an Environment Commissioner. Ex-officio members of the Commission include secretaries of the major infrastructure departments, including Treasury, Transport NSW, Health and Education.

Under the changes to the *Greater Sydney Commission Act* in 2018, local councils have to obtain written advice from the GSC that it supports their individual strategic plans. The GSC is required to comment on any rezoning proposal that might impact on the implementation of its plan. The Minister of Planning has to consult with the GSC about any state planning policies that will impact on the implementation of GSC plans, and the GSC has increased powers to request information from other agencies.

The GSC has identified five major planning districts across the Greater Sydney metropolitan region. After completing its first major plan, the *2018 Metropolitan Strategy*, the GSC prepared five major district plans. These district plans have become the template for local councils' strategic plans; the housing and employment targets in both the district and local council plans must align. The GSC monitors local government strategic planning documents and remains focussed on the implementation of each district plan.

Consequently, with the GSC at the centre of the process, in comparison to other Australian cities, the metropolitan planning process in Sydney is relatively transparent. However, final decision making on major transport infrastructure is still a cabinet process and subject to the politics of that process.

Infrastructure issues are dealt with via a GSC sub-committee that includes the secretaries of all the major infrastructure agencies. In reaction to concern from the community about the lack of infrastructure in fast growing areas, the GSC has developed the concept of a place-based infrastructure compact. This compact features collaboration between local areas and a range of infrastructure providers, as well as a six-step method for integrating housing and job growth forecasts with the infrastructure needed to support them (GSC 2019a).

The New South Wales Government's Department of Planning, Industry and Environment operates with the GSC and has a major role in processing local government strategic plans and setting planning policy. In an attempt to better coordinate the work of the GSC and the Department, the CEO of the GSC has been recently appointed as a Deputy Secretary - Strategic Directions and Integration inside the Department. The relationship between these agencies appears to be in flux at present.

In relation to local government, the Office of Local Government (OLG) is responsible for local government across New South Wales. The OLG's organisational purpose is to 'strengthen local government'. The OLG is the key adviser to the New South Wales Government on local government matters and their Minister is the Minister of Local Government.

Local Government NSW is the peak organisation that represents the interests of New South Wales general and special purpose councils. It advocates on behalf of member councils on a range of issues including land use planning. For example, they recently lobbied the New South Wales Government about changes to development control, which saw many development applications being decided by Local Planning Panels rather than councillors, and the timelines for local plan making.

There are six sub-regional local government cooperation structures in Sydney. These are coalitions of local governments, mostly undertaking advocacy work directed at the New South Wales Government and Australian Government, but also working together and developing joint strategies and sharing research and policy development.

Other organisations outside of the New South Wales Government connected to metropolitan governance include the Committee for Sydney. The Committee is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation of over 140 organisations from the business, academic, community housing sector and local government. The Board of the Committee, which sets the priorities of the organisation, is dominated by business. It was founded in the 1990s to support the economy and Sydney's status as a global city. In recent years, its priorities have broadened to include a range of issues such as resilience and culture.

The Committee has engaged energetically in the debates about the planning of Sydney and was a major advocate for the establishment of the GSC. In fact, the Committee lists on its website the creation of the GSC as one of its achievements. One of its current priorities is the 'Planning of Sydney' and it has established two task forces in the area.

3.5.2 Future directions

The main task of the GSC is to continue to implement its metropolitan strategy and its district plans through the development and implementation of local planning strategies.

3.5.3 Open questions

The main question, particularly in the eyes of the community, is the extent to which infrastructure plans and expenditure can mitigate the pains of growth in Sydney. Particular pressure points that communities have identified are overcrowding in schools, transport congestion and pressures on open space, especially in inner Sydney. The GSC and the sub-grouped commissions have already changed their purview from broad planning objectives to specific projects, perhaps reflecting the nature of engagement in Perth's joint Assessment Committees. Whether this more limited role further reduces a metropolitan overview is not yet clear.

Table 7: Current metropolitan governance in metropolitan Sydney

Metro examples			Roles of local government			
What are the institutional arrangements?	What are recent and current strategies?	Are there examples of ad hoc projects?	Does local government have a budget capacity to support collaborative projects?	Does local government have a decision-making role?	What examples are there of local government engaging in processes of metro governance?	Are there other examples of local government collaboration?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Greater Sydney Commission is the central focus of coordination Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment The strategic plans provide the major templates for future State government activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>Sydney Region Plan, a Metropolis of three Cities</i> 5 District Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becoming less common but State government recently commissioned a planning review in inner Sydney (Pyrmont) in reaction to a campaign by development interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some cases (see City of Sydney example). Local governments are key sources of funding for local infrastructure. This funding is mainly collected through development levies enabled by the NSW Planning Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to a point, but the focus in recent years has been to ensure alignment between top down and bottom up plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments are key stakeholders in all phases of metro governance. However, in the recent past councils have lost their planning powers and/or been sacked if the New South Wales Government thinks they are not aligning their 'vision' with the metropolitan strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Sydney is a major partner in some infrastructure projects such as the CBD light rail project and Green Square redevelopment. Regional Organisations of councils Committee for Sydney has a number of local government members

Source: Greater Sydney Commission Act 2018; 2018 Metropolitan Strategy, GSC 2019; 2019b.

3.6 Comparative considerations

The summaries above suggest a number of considerations for the context and directions of local government's role in metropolitan governance in Australia's largest cities. These include that:

- The processes of local government and planning reform remain significant drivers of institutions and processes, and typically limit or heavily modulate the scope for local government engagement in these processes.
- The politics of metropolitan governance is heavily framed as a state government concern (with perhaps the exception of SEQ), limiting the visibility of local government in the issues that appear to matter in debates of metropolitan scale.
- That experimental and emergent models do not exhibit the stability, legitimacy and mutual incentives that would be expected in viable approaches to collaborative governance. Examples appear to be subject to cycles of policy and politics, adapting to changing objectives.

In Australia, no metropolitan governance structure (except for the state governments if considered as metropolitan governance structures) has strong authority, in the sense that they can make independent and binding decisions for their metropolitan area. The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) has the strongest authority. The GSC has developed the metropolitan plan, local councils have to obtain written advice from the GSC that it supports their strategic plans and the Minister of Planning has to consult with the GSC about any state planning policies that will impact on the implementation of GSC plans. However, final decision-making on major transport infrastructure is still a cabinet process and infrastructure issues are dealt with via a GSC sub-committee that includes the secretaries of all the major infrastructure agencies. As in other metropolitan areas around the world, autonomy and authority are often viewed sceptically by existing administrative institutions and government levels, fearing to lose power.

When considering at the legitimacy of the most prominent metropolitan governance structures in the reviewed metropolitan areas, the SEQ Council of Mayors and the Greater Adelaide Region Organisation of Councils have been directly elected in the sense that they are councils of the metropolitan mayors. The GSC, however, was created by state government, commissioners were appointed by state government and ex-officio members include secretaries of the major infrastructure Departments. Melbourne and Perth do not have clear metropolitan governance structures that cover the entire metropolitan area.

Australia's metropolitan areas are fragmented, and metropolitan governance is complex. Metropolitan governance structures try to achieve better coordination and reduce complexity. This is undertaken differently in the metropolitan areas depicted above. However, all of the areas have a metropolitan plan that has been developed by state government. In some areas there also exist further plans, which partly overlap, but sometimes also define the metropolitan area differently and are not necessarily clearly connected to the overall metropolitan plan. In Adelaide for example, the *Natural Resource Management Plan* uses different spatial boundaries to those of the planning region. In Melbourne, six sub-regional plans for jobs, services and infrastructure are connected to the metropolitan plan, but also developed by the sub-regions themselves. Additionally, a plethora of state authorities exist in Melbourne, all of which deal with specific topic areas and reduce complexity this way. However, the high number of authorities has considerably increased complexity.

Community participation in metropolitan governance is low in the different metropolitan areas. Maybe the clearest example is found in the Metropolitan Partnerships initiative in Melbourne, through which businesses and the community develop five-year plans for their respective sub-region. However, it is unclear what effect this participation and these plans will have on the overall metropolitan development. Public participation and engagement has been a feature of the development of the respective metropolitan plans. However, as Bunker (2012) identifies, the 'path dependency' of Australian metropolitan planning, combined with what McGuirk (2005) describes as ubiquitous 'planning by exceptionalism' reduce the effectiveness of participation in many of the planning issues that matter locally and at the city-scale. The strongest influence of the community on metropolitan governance appears to be respective state government elections and, in a number of elections, metropolitan issues have played an important role.

Economic and business actors (including lobbyists) have been influential in shaping recent metropolitan plans. Furthermore, they have a more active role in metropolitan development and, in a way, metropolitan governance because they have stronger lobbying powers than citizens. Notable influence includes changes to the urban growth boundary in Sydney through developers, as well as so-called ‘market-led’ proposals such as the West Gate Tunnel in Melbourne where private interests are shaping key infrastructure outcomes. Additionally, the business sector has influence through public-private partnerships for infrastructure and other projects.

In all of the metropolitan areas there are voluntary cooperation structures of councils, mostly for advocacy towards the state government. Some of these are sub-regional, such as WESROC in Perth or IMAP in Melbourne. Others cover the whole metropolitan area, such as GAROC in Adelaide. There are also topic-related collaborative structures, especially with regard to climate change (such as Resilient Cities Melbourne), but also other topics (like the Metropolitan Transport Forum in Melbourne). These collaborative partnerships do not have strong powers or capacity but tend to deal with issues and topic areas that are urgent to local government, and where there is not much support from the state government. City Deals start to play a role but are very varied and topic specific. Local governments are involved, but to different extents. Their main advantage is additional funding for certain projects, and these appear to be project focussed. In this context, local government can be acknowledged as sites of innovation. Examples include the City of Darebin in Victoria being the first local government worldwide to declare a climate emergency or councils working to respond to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Commonalities between the regions are the trend towards taking away (planning) powers from local government and making them the ‘line manager’ in a process driven elsewhere, while power is shifted towards the state governments. This also plays out in the different state planning reforms and changes to the Local Government Acts with their emphasis on fiscal responsibility and procedural (rather than genuinely political) action. Important differences are evident between the regions, not only as metropolitan governance structures are hugely different; but also with local governments being involved to a different extent. In the following section these themes are extended through examples of the role of local government in the international context, with insights for Australian metropolitan regions.

4. International examples of metropolitan governance

- International examples suggest considerable scope for approaches to collaborative and cooperative local government engagement with metropolitan governance.
- Overcoming inter-municipal competition and also institutional fragmentation across levels of government are important drivers for establishing metropolitan governance arrangements. However, most have been established to achieve a better integration of specific policy areas, including transport planning and urban planning.
- Arrangements vary considerably and are shaped by existing institutional, legal and political arrangements. Arrangements will not easily be reproduced but do offer an inspiration for finding context-sensitive approaches for Australian metropolitan regions.

Internationally, there are numerous examples of approaches to more effectively plan for large urban regions, including some emergent examples with considerable scope for collaborative and cooperative local government engagement in metropolitan governance. Overcoming inter-municipal competition and institutional fragmentation across levels of government are important drivers for establishing metropolitan governance arrangements. Although, many international examples have been established to achieve a better integration of specific policy areas, including transport planning and urban planning. Arrangements vary considerably and are shaped by existing institutional, legal and political arrangements. They will not easily be reproduced in Australia but can offer inspiration for finding context-sensitive approaches in the current debate on metropolitan governance.

4.1 Inter-municipal cooperation in the international context

Since the 1990s, there has been renewed interest from democratic nations around the world in the establishment of metropolitan governance arrangements to coordinate land use and transport and avoid negative externalities. While Australian local government cooperation has been described as ‘shallow and fragile’, not least because of a lack of legislation that would compel ‘municipalities to enter into joint undertakings or establish “upper-tier” authorities’ (Sansom 2019: 1), progress has been made overseas in establishing specific bodies with responsibilities among public authorities for metropolitan-wide development.

These are of varying degrees of institutionalisation, reflecting the national and local circumstances and the commonly identified challenges to be addressed at the metropolitan scale. Metropolitan governance arrangements are being established to achieve more effective coordination of land use and transport development, and to overcome competition over investments between neighbouring local governments, which are feared to result in negative externalities unless coordinated (OECD 2017).

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has become a proponent of metropolitan governance reform, with its position informed by reviews of the metropolitan governance arrangements in its member countries. The OECD contends that identified challenges resulting from the mostly informal metropolitan governance arrangements could be overcome by further institutionalisation (OECD 2015). However, other analyses have noted that establishing a metropolitan government does not necessarily address all concerns in relation to legitimacy and democratic accountability (Cheyne 2018).

Therefore, establishing a metropolitan government may not offer a solution to all challenges and be suitable in all contexts, but it could help achieve stability depending on the context and existing institutional arrangements. Major reforms may be more difficult to implement in some countries and regions than in others. For example, in countries where local authorities have constitutionally established powers and where taxes paid by households and businesses are an important aspect of own-source revenue of local government (such as in Poland and Germany), there are obvious disincentives to inter-municipal cooperation. Local governments might resist attempts to shift some of their powers and competences to a regional body.

For any progress on inter-municipal cooperation to be achieved, including in relation to the establishment of metropolitan governance (or government) arrangements, national or regional and state policies have been identified as critical (OECD 2017). There are examples, such as France, where the national government has explicitly promoted inter-municipal cooperation to overcome the limitations of traditionally small municipalities in providing services and infrastructures to the residents of urban regions. In response to national government intervention, numerous French regions have set up cooperative arrangements to address even contentious spatial planning issues (such as the location of waste management plants) (OECD 2017).

Aside from leadership and support from national government, another factor that is crucial to overcoming institutional inertia and implementing metropolitan governance reform that is supported by all stakeholders are processes designed to ensure buy-in by municipal governments and support from the business sector and the civil society (OECD 2015). In order to achieve durable metropolitan governance arrangements, the OECD (2015) has suggested a number of steps, including: motivating collaboration by identifying concrete metropolitan projects; building metropolitan ownership among key stakeholders; tailoring reliable sources of metropolitan financing; designing incentives and compensations for metropolitan compromise; and implementing a long-term process of metropolitan monitoring and evaluation.

In complex multi-level governance systems, such as the European Union (EU), financial incentives have, since the 1990s, played an important role in supporting collaborative governance arrangements at different scales. Over several decades, the EU has provided significant regional policy funding for cross-border cooperation, including for metropolitan regions covering parts of different national territories (such as Lille metropolitan region and Luxembourg, see Durand 2014). Recently, the EU has also adopted legal provisions that facilitate the institutionalisation of cooperation agreements between municipalities and regional authorities across national borders (Dühr, Colomb et al. 2010).

Metropolitan regions located within one EU country have received more attention as important scales to improve the economic competitiveness of the EU overall. As a consequence, funding to support inter-municipal cooperation has been made available in the EU Cohesion Policy (regional policy) period 2013-2020 for so-called 'Integrated Territorial Investments' (ITIs). ITIs are intended to encourage integrated spatial planning across urban regions. Municipalities are required to establish inter-municipal cooperation agreements intended to collectively stimulate and decide on projects and investments of metropolitan importance.

The EU has no direct role in spatial planning, and initiatives such as ITIs are therefore commonly acknowledged to be experiments (which moreover were not trialled in all member states as country's could choose whether to make provisions for these EU instruments in their national strategies). However, the interest in ITIs reflects an increasing acknowledgement by the EU and national governments that better metropolitan coordination is important and that higher-level authorities have a role to play in providing financial incentives and legal tools to support inter-municipal cooperation.

While overcoming inter-municipal competition and institutional fragmentation across levels of government are usually stated as important drivers for cooperation at the metropolitan scale, the majority of metropolitan governance arrangements in OECD countries has been established to achieve a better integration of transport planning and urban planning (OECD 2015). This often presents additional challenges to the operational effectiveness of governance arrangements, because 'while there is widespread consensus that better connecting transport and spatial planning decisions helps prevent costly consequences of urban sprawl and promotes balanced development, institutional barriers remain slow to dismantle' (OECD 2015: 11). While the responsibility for transport planning and spatial planning occasionally lies within the same government department, more often than not, they are separated over different agencies. Different coordination mechanisms and instruments (such as integrated spatial development frameworks) have been set up in many metropolitan regions to better align strategic decisions and achieve both vertical and horizontal coordination, including across relevant policy sectors.

4.2 Typologies of metropolitan governance arrangements in international comparison

A number of typologies have been proposed that attempt to capture the diversity of inter-municipal cooperation arrangements in democratic nations around the world (OECD 2015; Kübler 2018; Samson 2019). Based on a review of governance arrangements in OECD countries, the arrangements for metropolitan-wide development have been categorised by the OECD into four main types. These types, and their share across metropolitan regions in 2014 according to the OECD review, are as follows:

- informal or soft co-ordination (in 2014, 52% of OECD metropolitan regions were assessed as falling into this category)¹
- inter-municipal authorities (24%)
- supra-municipal authorities (16%)
- a special status of 'metropolitan cities' (8%) (such as Daejeon in South Korea) (OECD 2015: 11).

Voluntary local government cooperation frequently results in only offering a platform to address those issues that are less contentious and mutually beneficial to all involved local actors (OECD 2017). On the other hand, where coordination arrangements for the entire metropolitan regions are in place, they can reportedly unlock significant development potential, such as in relation to nominations for the European Capital of Culture (Marseille, France in 2013), or the efficient integration of public transport and the positive impacts on economic competitiveness (Frankfurt-Rhein main metropolitan region in Germany).

According to the OECD (2015), metropolitan cooperation was instrumental in solving transport bottlenecks by overcoming high administrative fragmentation in Chicago in the United States. In addition, metropolitan regions with more durable metropolitan governance arrangements have achieved higher economic growth through better coordination with surrounding municipalities (such as Daejeon in South Korea).

However, typologies such as the one proposed by the OECD (2015), while useful to understand the spectrum of arrangements currently in place, also conceal the significant diversity between (and within) these categories in relation to the legal status of metropolitan arrangements, their composition, power, budget and staffing. Only a few metropolitan areas have been identified as having comprehensive metropolitan governance approaches in place, and metropolitan governance arrangements are rarely binding, with "less than one quarter of OECD metropolitan areas [having] a governance body that can impose regulations" (OECD 2015: 11).

Whether a formal or informal institutional arrangement for metropolitan governance is more effective depends considerably on the context, including, "the types of issues that a territory faces, the relationships among the actors, the resources at their disposal and, in general, the capacity to implement a common agenda. The policies of upper-level governments, regional or national, have a major impact on the adoption of inter-municipal or metropolitan planning frameworks. In countries with consensus-oriented politics and high capacity at the local level, soft coordination mechanisms are likely to work well. In other cases, more stringent coordination mechanisms at the metropolitan scale may be more effective" (OECD 2017: 25).

In metropolitan regions with more established metropolitan governance bodies, different approaches are being promoted to encourage more effective metropolitan spatial and transport planning. As the following examples show, metropolitan governance arrangements also change over time, and deeper institutionalisation and a formal rescaling of powers may prompt other questions in relation to their legitimacy and accountability.

¹ According to Samson (2019), most of the current cooperative arrangements in Australia fall into this category.

4.3 International examples of metropolitan government and metropolitan governance

One of the few examples of major local government reform that established a metropolitan government is the Auckland Regional Council in New Zealand. It was established in 2010 through the amalgamation of eight territorial authorities. The resulting large urban unitary council has been described as a ‘unique experiment’ in New Zealand (Cheyne 2018: 123). The metropolitan government is responsible for spatial and infrastructure planning and service delivery across the metropolitan region. The statutory requirement for a spatial plan stands in contrast to other local governments in New Zealand, where this requirement does not exist. Following the reform, an elaborate system of two-tiered shared governance and Indigenous and sectoral representation attempted to overcome “the democratic deficit associated with reduced numbers of elected representation” (Cheyne 2018: 137). However, there are continuing concerns over the Council’s position within the wider constitutional context and the relationships with local and central government (Cheyne 2018).

In the United Kingdom, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has substantial autonomy, assigned by the *Greater London Authority Act 2007*, including the ability to levy taxes directly from households and businesses in the metropolitan area to cover its expenses (Kübler 2018). The Mayor of London is directly elected in an area-wide constituency, which gives significant independence from localist interests (Kübler 2018). The Mayor of London is responsible for preparing the *London Plan*; a comprehensive statutory spatial development strategy for the Greater London area, which integrates economic, environmental, transport and social issues of relevance for the spatial development of Greater London until 2031 (a new plan is currently under consultation). The Mayor of London is required to consult on any policy changes or amendments of the *London Plan* with counties and districts adjoining the Greater London region (Harrison, Munton et al. 2004).

In turn, local plans of the London boroughs have to align with the *London Plan* and the metropolitan planning policies guide decisions on development applications assessed by councils. The expansive mayoral powers have been discussed critically, with questions raised whether the mayoral system is likely to lead to more effective or legitimate local government (Rydin, Thornley et al. 2004). Moreover, it has been noted that the OECD’s definition of the functional urban area of Greater London significantly exceeds the spatial coverage of the GLA (OECD 2015), indicating the challenges of agreeing on institutionalised arrangements for metropolitan governance for ‘functional’ regions.

In the United States (US), Spiller and Murrian (2018: 84) have noted the significant challenges to setting up metropolitan governance arrangements because of the ‘complex system of interwoven jurisdictions’. Nevertheless, in some parts of the US, local jurisdictions have voluntarily consolidated governments to address metropolitan scale issues, as for example in the urban regions of Nashville (Tennessee), Jacksonville (Florida) and Louisville-Jefferson (Kentucky). Elsewhere, less formalised structures prevail. For example, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) does not have formal authority over land use and zoning, which remains under municipal jurisdiction. However, the implementation of the jointly agreed metropolitan master plan *GO TO 2040* for Greater Chicago is facilitated through a federally funded technical assistance programme, which supports projects that are in line with the principles of *GO TO 2040* at the local level. In the US, Portland (Oregon) is a rare example of a bottom-up regional planning approach, whereby the local authorities in the metropolitan area requested that the state government grant statutory powers to a regional spatial plan that is binding on its member councils (Spiller and Murrian 2018). A more common response to metropolitan growth management and the challenges around coordinating infrastructure (notably water and transport infrastructure) has been the establishment of special-purpose inter-jurisdictional entities, with the federal government playing a role by providing financial incentives.

The situation in Canada is similar to Australia in that local governments have no constitutional status. They fall under the jurisdiction of provincial governments, and metropolitan governance arrangements are therefore predominantly the result of provincial intervention, with different provinces following their own paths. Metropolitan governance in Toronto is, for example, significantly shaped by 'a history of repeated local government boundary reforms imposed by the Ontario provincial government' (Horak and Doyon 2018: 109). British Columbia, on the other hand, has focused on providing frameworks to enable cooperative metropolitan governance arrangements. Consequently, in 1967, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) was established on the basis of existing inter-municipal special-purpose bodies. In 2007, the GVRD was renamed Metro Vancouver which has been described as 'a cooperative policy-making and service delivery entity designated by provincial legislation' (Horak and Doyon 2018: 116). Metro Vancouver comprises 23 local authorities and is a multi-purpose entity that combines regulatory land use planning, infrastructure planning and housing (Horak and Doyon 2018). Metro Vancouver coordinates regional planning through a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), which provides the basis for aligning the spatial plans of the local authorities within the metropolitan region. However, the development of transport infrastructure is not the responsibility of Metro Vancouver, but rather the remit of TransLink, a special-purpose authority set up by the provincial government in 1998, resulting in some persistent coordination challenges.

Another federation, Germany has spawned a considerable diversity of metropolitan governance arrangements of varying levels of institutionalisation. Local governments have constitutionally assigned powers. As such, inter-municipal cooperation greatly relies on the political will of the involved cities and counties. Since the 1990s the traditional bottom-up approach of inter-municipal cooperation has been complemented by a federal strategic policy framework. Given the absence of a dominant global city in the traditionally polycentric Germany, this federal policy aimed at enhancing the international profile of Germany's metropolitan regions by offering a powerful discursive frame (Dühr forthcoming). There is no federal funding attached to the status of a designated 'European Metropolitan Region', but the promise of enhancing their profile has resulted in eleven regions applying for this status.

Today, Germany's 11 metropolitan regions cover a significant portion of the country, but there are considerable differences in the levels of integration pursued (Dühr forthcoming). One example of deeper integration is the dedicated single authority in charge of coordinating transport and spatial planning at the metropolitan level in Stuttgart. The Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS) was created in 1994 through legislation by the state of Baden-Württemberg as a voluntary association of the city of Stuttgart and five adjacent districts. The VRS is governed by a directly elected regional parliament, and responsible for long-term regional integrated planning, which includes both regional transport planning and land use planning. At the same time, the VRS is the second-largest shareholder of the Stuttgart Regional Public Transport and Tariff Association (Verkehrs- und Tarifverbund Stuttgart, VVS) that is the provider of the regional public transport system. Although German municipalities have in principle exclusive planning rights in their territory, the specific legal arrangements for the VRS mean that it has the authority to overrule local land use plans and to restrict all activities which are in contradiction with the regional plan.

Another prominent example of placing transport planning at the centre of a spatial development strategy is the metropolitan region of Greater Copenhagen (Denmark). Denmark is a unitary country, and consequently the national government has played a significant role in shaping metropolitan governance arrangements. The strategic spatial development vision for the Greater Copenhagen region has been encapsulated in the *Finger Plan*, first introduced in 1947 and in 2007 formalised through a national planning directive. The *Finger Plan* has legally binding impact on all 34 municipalities covered within its remit. It proposes a focused approach to urban development along five public transport corridors, while keeping the areas in-between protected from urban sprawl and ensuring green and recreational spaces in close proximity to settlements (Olesen 2017). While the *Finger Plan* has been effective in controlling urban sprawl and supporting integrated decisions on urban and transport planning, a need for more effective metropolitan-wide cooperation arrangements has been identified (OECD 2015).

4.4 Considerations for Australian metropolitan governance

These international examples might offer inspiration for Australia on how to establish durable metropolitan governance arrangements that are capable of achieving effective integration between land use and transport planning, as well as coordination between different government levels and key actors in the urban region. Extensive consultation processes to align the priorities and goals between municipalities and possibly higher-level authorities have been identified as crucial; these processes result in mechanisms and instruments that enable continued dialogue and coordination in metropolitan regions.

There have been achievements in establishing durable arrangements for coordination and joint decision-making in metropolitan regions in a number of international examples, including in relation to integrated spatial and transport planning and on reaching agreement for binding spatial development frameworks. The examples discussed above suggest that such agreements are often contested, but power shifts can be achieved where government actors clearly understand the benefits of scalar adjustments. The arrangements between and within countries vary considerably, shaped by existing institutional, legal and political arrangements. This means that, while these international arrangements will not be easily reproduced elsewhere, they should serve as inspiration for a context-sensitive approach that addresses the problems identified in other metropolitan regions, including Australia.

5. Discussion: challenges and opportunities for the role of local government in Australian metropolitan governance

- Understandings of metropolitan governance have changed to challenge simple institutional models of government.
- The review of existing approaches in Australian cities suggests a range of collaborative partnerships that offer examples in an Australian context.
- The metropolitan challenge in Australia is to develop working approaches to governance that value local government and its capacity to operate at the local scale.
- Key issues in success include the breadth and extent of political legitimacy and accountability, and degrees of fiscal responsibility.

The way in which metropolitan governance is understood has changed in recent decades. It has become a concept that is inclusive of the broad range of processes and actors engaged in managing the city – not just the institutions of government. The definition of metropolitan governance, and how it is conceptualised, are central themes in the literature on metropolitan governance in Australia and internationally. For local government, these emergent conceptualisations offer challenges and opportunities for working beyond traditional institutional form of urban government. Issues of scale and scope, responsibility and reach, efficiency and effectiveness in metropolitan governance remain contested and are critical in understanding how, and in what circumstances, local collaboration can, and should, be effectively operationalised.

Our review of metropolitan governance in Australia found explicit models of collaborative partnerships, cooperative governance, state-led strategic planning projects and agencies and Commonwealth ventures into city-shaping. Presently, the SEQ region has the longest-standing arrangements of a form of collaborative governance through the South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SEQROC) and later the Council of Mayors South East Queensland (CoMSEQ). It also has fewer, larger local governments. Abbott (2013) suggests that the collaborative relationships between tiers of government offer the most value, especially in the influence these regional groupings have played in state government regional plan preparation and 'growth management', through consensus-based engagement between local and state governments in SEQ.

Newer examples such as the Greater Sydney Commission or Perth's Development Assessment Panels offer a more structured model in which local government is one stakeholder within an institutional structure. Arguably, these models risk diluting, rather than empowering local government. The creation of various forms of development corporations either for specific projects, or as 'corporatised' arms of state government, often circumvent established planning practices (Searle and Bunker 2010b) and follow a similar pattern of re-orienting the relationships between state and local governments.

Crommelin, Bunker et al. (2017) identify institutions such as the Greater Sydney Commission and the Western Australian Planning Commission as evidence of continuing 'professionalisation' of decision-making, aligning with development interests and emphasising project-led planning. Fensham (2015) further suggests that such institutional solutions to metropolitan planning remain limited by infrastructure funding arrangements that constrain delivery. This is an outcome confirmed by the experience of Melbourne's greenfields planning process (Nicholls, Phelan et al. 2018; Kroen, Taylor et al. 2018) as conducted by the Victorian Planning Authority, which itself has re-orientated the roles and relationships between the Victorian Government and local governments, particularly in relation to the provision of fringe metropolitan housing growth.

An emerging interest of the Australian Government in urban affairs has resulted in the establishment of 'City Deals' as governance, funding and infrastructure agreements between the three tiers of Australian government. Australian City Deals were introduced from 2016 and modelled on a similar UK approach to urban renewal and infrastructure funding. City Deals have often proved competitive, rather than collaborative (Waite and Morgan 2019).

The City Deals have been identified as offering potential to deliver dramatic changes in urban infrastructure (DPMC, undated; Evans and Stoker 2016). This has especially been notable as the Australian Government had been largely absent in Australian cities policy since the early 1970s (Troy 1978; Ruming et al. 2010). However, City Deals have been criticised for offering little more than a distribution of project funding with top-down decisions, and potential for political expediency (Hu 2019). The outcomes of this form of inter-governmental collaboration remain uncertain.

Self-organised local government coordination on a metropolitan level does exist within the Australian context but is relatively rare and mostly specific to certain topics. Various voluntary organisations offer opportunities for protecting local autonomy and minimise the risks of state intervention (Sansom 2019). Some of these now extend beyond specific regions and demonstrate local government legitimacy at the national or international level.

An example of this is the 100RC Resilient Melbourne program that can be seen as “an ‘experiment’ towards a collective framework for local government across the metropolitan region” (Davidson and Gleeson 2018: 233). Long-standing examples are the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and its member associations, such as Local Government NSW, the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria. However, these have operated more as lobbying groups than institutions that organise local government on specific topics, in particular funding arrangements and questions of maintaining legitimacy (Jones 2009).

Particularly germane to the role of local government within this are the ways in which such conceptualisations (both as problems and as methods) relate to real and ideated roles for local government. Given the constraints identified, whether through constitutional limitations, historical practices or through political power and motivation, a single approach to institutional change is unlikely and does not allow sufficient consideration of the governance structures and processes that have and do exist in metropolitan Australia.

There is no one-size fits all model for the challenges of metropolitan governance. Within the Australian context, the role of local government in metropolitan governance has been largely ignored or overlooked in favour of ‘the presumed self-evident truth’ that a more centralised government and governance model for each metropolitan area is the best way to achieve efficiency and equity in the Australian context. As Oakerson (1999: 117) observes, judging the efficacy of metropolitan governance models ‘on the single criterion of uniformity contributes little to the advancement of research or reform’.

5.1 Revalorising local government collaboration in metropolitan governance

The metropolitan challenge in Australia is to find multi-level governance approaches and mechanisms that are not only fit-for-purpose, but that are democratically defensible and adhere to the core principles of equity and transparency and emphasise subsidiarity at the local government scale to recognise local need and difference. Whether this involves ‘re-inventing the institutional wheel’ (Dovers 2009; Dovers and Hezri 2010) is unclear, but it will certainly require greater local government collaboration as core to the reform agenda.

Identified opportunities for the role of local government as part of multi-level federalism at the metropolitan scale are many and include: breaking institutional barriers and setting a precedent for collaboration; building capacity and sharing knowledge; resource sharing and bulk purchasing benefits; creating potential for innovation and an opportunity to address extraneous issues; and congruency of services and information, policies and legislation, and protocols. All of these benefits in turn, support better policy, planning and implementation at the metropolitan scale, and the potential for more sustainable outcomes for the communities they seek to serve (Steele, Eslami-Andargoli et al. 2013).

The policy implications relate to the motivation and capacity of local government to act and interact in this environment, but also involve the fiscal gap between capacity for revenue raising and sharing roles and expenditure. This involves greater recognition that scalar issues and responsibilities both matter and intersect (indeed are exacerbated) under the contemporary conditions of economic, social and environmental change.

Ostrom (2000), in an article entitled *The danger of self-evident truths*, challenges what she argues is the widely-held truth that big, centralised governments are always more effective and efficient in the production of public goods and services. By contrast, small governmental units serving a metropolitan area are inadequate, inefficient and inequitable in the production and delivery of public goods and services at the metropolitan scale.

“Individuals tend to believe that highly decentralized or polycentric systems are by their very nature disorderly and ineffective. Order is presumed to result from central direction. This common-sense assumption, however, leads to proposals to improve the operation of political systems that have had the opposite effect. By consistently taking the power to make decisions about the ways to innovate, adapt, and coordinate efforts away from those who are directly affected, policymakers have created institutions that are less able to respond to the problems they were created to address” (Ostrom 2000: 33).

In a study on public economies in metropolitan areas, Ostrom (2000: 33) observes that the creation of a few, large governments to provide all local services in any given metropolitan area is based on a number of assumptions including: that urban public goods and services are relatively homogeneous and affect all suburbs within a metropolitan area; urban voters share similar preferences for urban goods and services; voters can effectively articulate their preferences for urban goods and services through one representative body or electoral mechanism; elected officials can effectively translate citizen preferences into policy objectives assigned to public servants and determine tax rates for producing the revenue needed to achieve these objectives; public servants and bureaucrats will deliver goods and services to passive clients with the budgets they receive.

Each of these assumptions, Ostrom (2000) argues, is open to serious challenge in a metropolitan jurisdiction or region: urban public goods and services vary substantially from one another; the production of all services involves some active input or coproduction by the consumers being served; citizens do not necessarily share preferences for urban public goods and services which varies due to culture, geography, demographic and socio-economic status; financing public goods or services and designing mechanisms that reflect citizen preferences (and their willingness to pay) is difficult and complex; decisions about provision are made through voting mechanisms and the delegation of authority to public officials yet for large and diverse jurisdictions it is difficult to find good information about the collective and individual preferences of citizens; the smooth operation of centralized government is not guaranteed; and if public bureaucrats simply deliver services to passive citizens who are not actively engaged in coproduction, the level and quality of these public goods and services will be seriously reduced.

5.2 The elements of effective roles for local government

The possibilities and potentialities for greater collaboration with local government in metropolitan governance has been largely overlooked or underestimated in the Australian-based policy and planning literature and institutional debates and context. Greater local government engagement can be very effective for operationalising metropolitan governance structures, offering: legitimacy through elections of local councils; the cooperation with the local level through the congruence of actors; the focus on shared interests in the city region; the fit of the territorial cover (however, in Australia, some local government areas actually cover metropolitan and rural parts); the flexibility of the territorial cover (if the functional area becomes larger local councils can be included); and the potential for subsidiarity.

Proponents of collaboration argue that effective metropolitan governance is a result of cooperative partnership arrangements based on negotiation processes between a variety of policy-relevant actors, rather than of institutional consolidation, hierarchy or competition (Friskin and Norris 2001; Wallis 1994). They contend that several paths may lead to effective area-wide governance and that there is not one single concept that fits every region (Kübler and Schwab 2007; OECD 2001).

The emphasis is on negotiation and voluntary cooperation as essential elements to successfully govern a region; whether this is happening through a regional government or a loose network depends on the particular actors, institutions and constellations of each region (Norris 2001b; Lefèvre 1998). However, the need for a steering central authority is acknowledged to ensure that regional-scale problems are addressed within networks of cooperation, which implies a new role for government rather than its disappearance (Fürst 2003; Savitch and Vogel 2000).

Figure 1: Revalorising the role of local government in metropolitan governance



Source: Adapted from Andersson, Bauer et. al. 2008:3-4.

Criticisms of this approach are connected to its focus on collaborative partnerships as a necessary and achievable approach. Critics doubt the relevance of cooperative arrangements and argue that parochial attitudes and competition are stronger than the advantages of cooperation (Fürst 2005; Wheeler 2002; Norris 2001a). Others believe that voluntary cooperation will focus on non-controversial rather than divisive (or decisive) issues (Norris 2001a). Furthermore, a weakness is seen in the lack of focus on legitimacy, democracy and transparency, however this has changed in recent years (Kübler and Schwab 2007).

For example, Walker (1987) describes regional governance arrangements, voluntary collaboration or informal cooperative arrangements as the 'easiest' governance approach to establish. Walker classifies the establishment of governance arrangements on three levels: 1) 'easy' (e.g. informal collaboration); 2) 'middling' (e.g. legislation for a special district); and 3) 'hard' (e.g. the development of a metro government through consolidation or restructuring). The easy option is also described as 'weak' and 'tenuous' often predicated on single issues, short time frames, local fragmented coordination and no formal structure. Overall, the literature suggests issues of context and contingency are crucial in understanding the scope for shifts to useful and legitimate governance models – collaborative or otherwise.

The following priorities adapted from Andersson, Bauer et al. (2008) within the context of this research focus on strategically positioning the role of local government in metropolitan governance collaborations. This involves critical attentiveness to six key areas required to revalorise the local government role, as summarised in Figure 2 and described further below. Challenging areas for metropolitan governance include land use and transport planning, infrastructure planning, public transport, economic development, culture, (social) housing, environmental regulation, water and waste.

For the successful establishment of metropolitan government and governance structures it is necessary that: they are accepted by citizens and political actors, as well as other non-public actors (legitimacy); they cover the relevant geographical area (territorial cover); and they reduce complexity and are capable of making relevant decisions that can be implemented (authority and autonomy). This includes the cooperation with existing administrative levels and entities, coordination, accountability and some form of legitimacy through citizen influence (i.e. elections).

1. *Targeted actors.* From whom to whom does political power, financial resources, and/or administrative responsibilities need to be transferred and under what conditions?
2. *Administrative mandate.* What is the content of the new local/metropolitan mandate? What is it that the local government has been empowered to do? What specific goods and services are the local actors are asked to perform? What happens if they do not do this?
3. *Degree of local political authority and autonomy.* What specific decision-making powers are devolved to local government? What are the boundaries of the politically autonomous domain? What political rights do local governments have to create their own place-specific rules and strategies within the metropolitan context?
4. *Extent of local fiscal powers.* What authority does the local government have to levy local taxes? In which sectors may they do so? Can the local government charge user fees for services delivered? How are local revenues recorded and accounted for? What recourse does the local government have if revenue is not appropriately shared?
5. *Fiscal independence.* Does the local revenue stream satisfy the local government's budgetary needs? If not, how financially dependent is the local government on state or federal government financial transfers? What strings are attached to centrally provided funds?
6. *Political accountability.* To whom are local decision makers accountable within the metropolitan context? What avenues and mechanisms exist for holding government accountable? Are decision makers democratically elected? Can local citizens participate in decisions? (adapted from Andersson, Bauer et al. 2008)

Local government partnerships and initiatives, far from being 'easy' or 'weak' as outlined by Walker (1987), can be reconceptualised as creative experimentation and resilience within the metropolitan scale. Several critical issues for local government engagement and collaboration emerge from the Australian local government context described above. The features of cooperation vary through formal and informal networks, and involve horizontal and vertical cooperation, both between and across tiers of government. Local government, despite constraints in resources, revenue-raising capacity and expenditure capacity demonstrate innovative potential and democratic legitimacy attentive to the local scale.

Reconceptualising the role of local government in Australian metropolitan governance does not negate the possibilities and prospects—or, as some argue, urgent need for—new government and governance models that better address the current crisis and challenges occurring at the metropolitan scale. However, better recognising the vital role of local government within metropolitan governance as “a political system that has multiple centres of power at differing scales, provides more opportunity for citizens and their officials to innovate and to intervene so as to correct maldistributions of authority and outcomes” (McGinnis 1999, Ostrom 1997).

Turning the deficit narrative about the role of local government in metropolitan governance within the context of Australian federalism around is an important first step. Local government has a vital role to play at the metropolitan scale, and this is already being demonstrated. Local government should be recognised, supported and encouraged to continue to contribute localised knowledge and skills in addressing the key challenges confronting Australian cities and regions.

6. Conclusion: areas for further research

Australian federalism poses significant challenges for implementing effective governance at the metropolitan scale. There is a lack of constitutional mechanisms and motives for enacting metropolitan government. There is also an absence of clear and effective institutional arrangements for the planning of urban development and the coordination of urban services, including infrastructure, below the level of state government. There are no clear means of collective democratic expression about resource allocation and strategic issues at the metropolitan scale, although experimental examples exist.

The metropolitan scale issues that are widely recognised as requiring urgent attention in Australia include, but are not limited to: responding to climate change resulting in more frequent and intense changes to weather patterns; rising infrastructure demands for housing and household energy; increasing regional inter-dependence for employment; transport challenges including better resourcing of public transport systems in the face of an over-reliance on private cars; housing affordability and the adequate provision and distribution of public services such as childcare, schools and hospitals; degradation of natural resource systems that sustain public water supplies, biological resources, sense of place and recreational opportunities; and the diminishing integrity of ecological communities, key landscape habitats and wildlife corridors.

For some commentators, these challenges appear to require forms of representative metropolitan governance or in other words *metropolitan governments*, whether as elected bodies or constituted by local government representation. Tomlinson (2017: 1), for example, advocates the need for metropolitan governance that is able to “distance itself from state and federal governments when deciding metro-scale infrastructure and services priorities”. In Australia, this would imply a structure accountable to a specifically metropolitan constituency, when undertaking strategic planning and metro-scale infrastructure projects and services, generating revenue and exercising some fiscal autonomy.

However, attempted solutions to the challenges of metropolitan governance are often inadequate, conflicting and uncoordinated within the Australian metropolitan context. Spiller (2018) argues that the existing arrangements for addressing metropolitan challenges reflect: a lack of democratic legitimacy and accountability; a mismatch in scope and scale; and demonstrated inadequacies of fiscal and taxation policy reform levers and outcomes. The use of different sectoral policies at differing scales tends to simply shift problems across administrative borders while offering contradictory policies that generate more spatial problems than they resolve (Dühr, Colomb et al. 2010). Similarly, reliance on parallel multi-level governance mechanisms (the silos of instituted bureaucracy) that are institutionally divided, does not address the issues and challenges increasingly manifest in cities at the metropolitan scale. The resulting impact affects the lived experience of Australia’s cities and their ecological and economic capacity.

In Australia, metropolitan governance structures are needed in some form to effectively address pressing issues, such as: achieving sustainable development goals including action on climate change; coordinating population and urban development growth; and minimising spatial inequities and suburban sprawl. Whether this form is a metropolitan government or a coalition or network and how boundaries are drawn will need to be negotiated in every city region and metropolitan area. This negotiation will depend upon potential actors, existing structures, the most pressing problems and opportunities for cooperation and participation. In the context of this report, the focus has been on the role of local government in cooperation with each other, the state government and further actors at the metropolitan scale. However, a number of areas are identified for future research.

6.1 Local government innovation in metropolitan governance

Contextual research into the various models of practice in Australia's metropolitan cities is needed. Specific and thematic examples of further research may reveal additional opportunities and models for action, including areas such as transport and housing, and the roles played (and potentially played) by local government in novel governance models. Looking beyond the metropolitan regions for examples of more cohesive governance and interactions may offer lessons from beyond the metropolis. More generally, local government research into a seeming democratic deficit should consider the specific roles that collaborative or cooperative models may offer to enhance local decision-making legitimacy and capacity to address the challenges of Australia's fiscal federalism.

6.2 Formal and informal role of local government in metropolitan governance

Further research needs to explore more deeply the ways in which genuinely local engagement in metropolitan planning and governance can be conducted. The formal and informal demarcation in roles in Australian jurisdictions vary, but tendencies in local government reform have resulted in a reduced role of local government influence beyond bounded processes. The nascent, novel examples of collaboration, whether vertical or horizontal, have emerged from beyond state governments, whether as Australian Government City Deals, or as international collaborations in critical issues such as climate change. Specific examples of formal cooperative structures, such as GAROC in South Australia, or Metropolitan Partnerships in Victoria also deserve additional investigation as working models in Australia. This suggests that the scope for these to make changes at the city-wide scale offers fertile research opportunities.

6.3 Democratic role and purpose of metropolitan scale governance and government

Significant questions emerge regarding the democratic 'offer' and role (real and potential) of local government. Given what they offer as local institutions, questions arise about how they can provide a democratic lens to metropolitan governance giving both the reforming impulses in each state and the gap in territorial geography to operate in dynamic and growing metropolitan regions. Questions such as whether the "Queensland model" has wider application, or whether the Australian Government can make local government relevant (and bypass the states) are interesting to explore. However arguably more critical are issues that focus on the stability of the models that exist in each state, and the efficacy of these processes for delivering better, more sustainable outcomes.

6.4 The role of local government in metropolitan restructure

Urban growth and changes to urban form, including the patterning of housing, employment and economic activity have been critical issues for several decades, particularly under a period of economic and population growth in most Australian metropolitan regions. Recent shocks to Australian urban life and urban economies as a result of COVID-19 suggest longer term changes in the population growth through immigration, for the patterns of work and daily travel (particularly in relation to central city economies) and in how effective targeting of any economic stimulus from state and federal governments should occur locally. This raises questions regarding the changing role of local governments in a period of spatial restructure and slower growth, and their capacity to shape liveable communities and local living, including for work.

This research suggests that local government retains influence and meaning in a range of issues that matter to the liveability, development and functioning of Australia's metropolitan regions. However, the analysis of practice has shown that they are still removed from real influence on issues that have scope to create change in our cities. The institutions of metropolitan governance are myriad, and the fragmentary approaches deliberate policy devices. Future research should build on the findings of this report to advance the advantages and possibilities of the role of local government in more coordinated and collaborative approaches to the pressing issues faced by Australian metropolitan city-regions.

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