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South East Queensland Regional Plan

Shaping SEQ

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About Engineers Australia

The Institution of Engineers Australia (Engineers Australia) is the not-for-profit professional association for engineers. Established in 1919, Engineers Australia is constituted by Royal Charter to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of the community.

Engineers Australia is the trusted voice of the profession. We are the global home for engineering professionals renowned as leaders in shaping a sustainable world.

Introduction

Engineers Australia would like to thank the Queensland Government for the opportunity to make comment on the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan, *ShapingSEQ*.

Engineers Australia has consistently advocated for integration of Land Use and Infrastructure planning, in line with recommendations of organisations including the Productivity Commission¹ and Infrastructure Australia².

Engineers Australia welcomes the broad-based holistic approach taken in developing *ShapingSEQ* and support the use of the proposed five major 'themes' underpinning its planning process. The use of these five 'themes' should provide a useful structure for the essential community discussions about this planning process and its desired outcomes.

Engineers Australia also welcomes the level of contribution and commitment to the plan from senior representatives of the various Local Government Authorities whose respective jurisdictions combine to constitute the South East Queensland region. Such a regional plan needs to traverse all levels of Government that collectively represent the regional and sub-regional communities comprising South East Queensland. It is gratifying to see a recognition of the true diversity of lifestyle options and environments that uniquely define South East Queensland, along with a commitment to preserve and develop these characteristics throughout *ShapingSEQ's* planning horizon (50-year vision, with a 25-year implementation focus).

The adoption of the concept of 'complete communities' should also provide a useful community discussion basis. This concept reflects the holistic planning processes adopted for recent greenfield master planned developments which have successfully evolved into new thriving community centres, and should also assist with identifying the planning and infrastructure requirements necessary to support the increasing use of 'infill' population capacity within existing suburbs. However, the challenges associated with retro-fitting such planning approvals and infrastructure into existing communities is not underestimated.

Whilst we recognise the generally positive aspects of this draft *ShapingSEQ*, there are a number of observations and comments that Engineers Australia believes would improve this draft document and increase the likelihood of this planning process achieving its stated objectives.

¹ http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/131554/sub026-infrastructure.pdf

² http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/submissions/aip/files/Engineers_Australia.pdf

Context and presentation of the Plan

The overall context of the draft *ShapingSEQ* document appears to be that ‘community conversations’ will be held to raise awareness of this plan. Engineers Australia strongly advocates that this plan, like its predecessors and subsequent versions, needs to have community ownership rather than awareness. Ownership by the community is essential to provide planning resilience as Governments change over time, i.e. once finalised, this plan needs to remain in effect until reviewed as a normal part of regional strategic planning processes. In the absence of this ownership and resilience, industry and the community cannot move forward with any degree of confidence, and the development of necessary projects will not have the requisite context. It is Government’s role to facilitate this ownership, and encapsulate this concept within the planning document.

To assist the ‘community ownership’ of the regional plan, it is considered that more emphasis should be given in this document as being the next evolution of the existing regional planning process that has been in place for over 10 years now, rather than trying to represent this as a whole new process initiated by the current Government. Apart from the brief references to previous South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plans there is little context for this plan to build on and reinforce what has already been achieved as a consequence of having had a regional plan driving our development and investment for more than 10 years now. It is considered that changing the title of this document to *ShapingSEQ* instead of preserving that which is already familiar to the community (SEQRP 2005-2026 followed by SEQRP 2009-2031) is an unnecessary distraction. Previous Regional Plans are legislated documents.

To further assist this community ownership, it is suggested that some restructuring of the document would make it easier for the community to understand and follow. Whilst the current draft contains much information, it often appears to duplicate concepts, potentially creating confusion. For example, having introduced the five ‘themes’ that underpin this planning process, there are a series of vision statements collated under these themes generated by the community consultation (pages 10 & 11) subsequently followed by another set of vision statements similarly collated under these themes (pages 24 & 25). These could be integrated for simpler communication. It is suggested that the overall content of this document could be more simply presented if structured as:

- 1) SEQRP 2016 Context
- 2) Vision for SEQ Region (50 years)
- 3) Snapshot of SEQ Region Now
- 4) Focus on Next 25 Years
- 5) Delivery & Implementation

It is considered important that the various elements of this ‘Vision’ section are collated and presented early in the document, rather than being somewhat fragmented and presented after the current position as in the current document structure. The Context section should also capture various figures that currently seem fragmented throughout the document (eg Fig10, page 64; Fig 12, page88; pages 136 & 137).

The internal structure of Chapter 3 (Next 25 years) could be simplified, and there is a tendency for some duplication. Currently it is structured with Part A – Regional Goals & Strategies, Part B – Regional Growth Pattern, and then Part C – Sub-Regional Goals & Strategies. Part B seems unrelated to Parts A & C and breaks the continuity of presenting specific Goals & Strategies; rather it reads as a set of planning ‘principles’ which are also presented elsewhere in the document.

The data presented in Table 1 *Population Projections* and Table 2 *Dwelling Supply Benchmarks* is critical to the outcomes captured within this plan. It is, however, considered that these tables could better present this important information if:

- 1) Table 1 were to include percentages of the respective Local Government Areas (LGA) populations contribution to the total South East Queensland (SEQ) populations, in both 2015 & 2041, so that the impact of the shifting population centres comprising SEQ can be readily seen;
- 2) Table 2 were to include the percentages of additional dwellings for each respective LGA area, so that the level of forecast impact on each LGA can be readily seen. Currently it provides the breakdown of infill/greenfield percentage for each LGA, but not the total impact;
- 3) Both Table 1 & 2 were to be presented with the Sub-Regional Grouping of LGA’s evident. This sub-Regional grouping is introduced in Chapter 3 Part C, but is not applied consistently throughout the document. This grouping should also have been part of the ‘context’ section up front.

As an example of the benefits of including this additional information, it can be seen from Table 1 that the relative regional significance of Brisbane and Ipswich LGAs has shifted and will continue to shift, and it is suggested that this is a direct result of strategies delivered through previous SEQ Regional Plan outcomes.

Population and growth

The population projections are referred to in various places throughout the document, and each time subtly different in terms of value and timeline. It is suggested that a thorough review of all references to population projections is undertaken to ensure absolute consistency for document credibility. Also, the population projections appear to present the average population growth rate over the last 10 years as 2.2 per cent per annum (page 15), whereas an average annual growth rate of approx. 1.8 per cent per annum has been adopted over the next 25 years, with a lower average annual growth rate (approx. 1.5 per cent) adopted for the full 50-year planning horizon. These forecast growth rates are not explicitly identified and are required to be calculated from the data presented, with no real discussion in the document, other than footnotes about medium projections being adopted, as to why the lower forecast average annual growth rates have been adopted.

The Growth discussion on page 32 identifies the two important issues as “ensuring adequate land supply” and “where & how to provide housing”. This discussion is supported by the forecast trend for infill/greenfield development mix and the presentation of examples of typical increased density housing solutions. However, this discussion also needs to include the

various other factors essential to successfully addressing this issue and achieving 'complete communities'. These factors include localised jobs, community infrastructure, provision of appropriate greenspace, convenient mobility and transport nodes access, appropriate community recreational facilities, etc. These factors need to be included in an expanded discussion of Element 3 and constitute some of the largest challenges facing LGAs in successfully 'retro-fitting' population density to existing suburbs and communities.

Table 4 presents current and forecast employment numbers for South East Queensland. However, without any geographical distribution for these numbers this data is nowhere near as useful as it could be, since one of the primary planning objectives is to target co-location of employment and population distribution as an important travel demand management initiative and a contributor towards 'complete communities'. This becomes particularly relevant to the discussion on pages 42-49 where this plan promotes the concept of co-locating enterprise, industry and knowledge hubs. Any such co-location strategy must be implemented in conjunction with an appropriate population distribution strategy and supported by an appropriate infrastructure investment strategy. Otherwise, historical mistakes will be repeated that have resulted in high levels of travel demand (particularly car-based), isolated communities, adverse industry impacts on residential areas, productivity constraints on industry, etc.

Connection and corridors

The discussion on Cross River Rail doesn't identify the strategic enabling objective of this project that is fundamental to enabling the further development of the South East Queensland rail network over the full 50-year planning horizon of this document. Additionally, given that this discussion is located within a section addressing the next 25 years, it doesn't identify or discuss what happens after this first stage of the rail expansion, which surely must happen within the next five-to-10 years, thereby requiring further stages within the nominated 25-year planning horizon.

For example, the CRR Change report released in February 2017 projects passenger growth to reach 288 per cent of 2015 levels by 2036, which is within the *ShapingSEQ* focus period 2016-2041, and yet beyond the forecast capacity increases resulting from the current Cross River Rail scheme. Consequently, this SEQ plan should be clear about how population growth and infrastructure utilisation growth will affect the success of the proposals in *ShapingSEQ*, and what initiatives are intended to meet potential population demands.

In Table 6 the listed inner 5km knowledge precincts do not seem to have captured the Greenslopes private medical centre which clusters many advanced medical facilities and also provides a key local focus. Whilst on the limit of the 5km zone, it does seem to be an obvious omission from the 'Knowledge Precinct' centres.

The discussion on regional connection should also identify that as population density is increasing in existing suburban areas (Table 4 indicates that 94 per cent of BCC's forecast dwellings to 2041 will be infill), the requirement for increased public transport services will require significant investment in both operating costs as well as additional capacity infrastructure.

Within the connect discussion, there is little emphasis on corridor identification and protection for future additional network expansions, apart from the general representations on Map 3. Such a discussion would greatly assist communities to understand, plan around, and make decisions regarding future lifestyle and accommodation options. This lack of strategic corridor identification and preservation is one of the major obstacles to future transport planning in South East Queensland.

There is a level of inter-dependency between various identified network schemes, for example the identified trunk corridor to Flagstone (Map 3 page 59, and Table 11 page 62) within the existing interstate rail corridor can only be realised after Cross River Rail is addressed, since this corridor enters the network through Salisbury and is therefore required to cross the Brisbane river. This new trunk corridor is shown on Map 3 and discussed on page 95, but not shown on Figure 13 (page 91) where corridor infill will happen through Greenbank and Browns Plains in addition to the greenfield growth at Greater Flagstone.

Delivery

The discussion on Delivery does not discuss the most significant factor impeding planned initiatives from being realised, i.e. financing and funding. Whilst it is accepted that this is a strategic planning document, there should be some discussion about how this plan influences development and investment. There is a discussion regarding “Measures That Matter”, whereas without some discussion regarding financing and funding processes the plan will not be realised or regarded by the community as one that matters. The mis-alignment between what Governments have been prepared to finance and what the South East Queensland communities need can lead to poor planning outcomes and a continued backlog of essential infrastructure across South East Queensland.

Conclusion

Engineers Australia supports long term strategies that include land use management, infrastructure pipelines and sustainable communities.

Engineers Australia believes that governments should prepare, fund and publish long term plans for cities and regions and that communities should be comprehensively engaged to ensure the of high level infrastructure to support their needs.

Engineers Australia welcomes the release of the revised SEQ Regional Plan and looks forward to any opportunity to discuss the South East Queensland Regional Plan in more detail with you.



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