

## **After the crash: Options for large cities in Australia, post-prosperity**

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The paper presents findings of two research tasks: an audit of infrastructure provision in Australian cities during the long period of prosperity, and an assessment of the locational consequences of the major employment shifts that occurred in Australia in roughly the same time period.

The paper uses these findings to explore the state of economy in Australian cities at the end of Australia's long period of Howard-led prosperity. We might also call this the period of clumsy privatisation.

The end of prosperity has come with a number of crises. The financial crash of 2008 and its recessionary aftermath coincide with the crisis of climate change and of mounting crisis in resources provision, especially in energy and food supply. Each of these crises has major urban economic dimensions and will require specifically-urban responses.

The paper argues that the two most critical responses to the crises – and thereby to the creation of sustainable cities characterised by quality living for all – require close attention to the skills bases of our cities and the quality of our urban infrastructure.

Yet, and despite prosperity, we have neglected the way the geography of work has evolved in our cities; and we have allowed our capacity to plan, finance and operate urban infrastructure to erode alarmingly. In short, we now lack the wherewithal to build sustainable cities.

Restoring the ability to enact effective change involves an upheaval in the ways we plan, finance and manage cities. New approaches to the operation of the urban economy are needed requiring new priorities that stretch beyond traditional land use planning and management activity. A new enthusiasm for the design and management of employment lands, for instance, is long overdue. So too we need new approaches to the design and provision of large urban infrastructure items.

Among other challenges – including the abandonment of some time-honoured political shibboleths – these will require new approaches to risk sharing across public and private sectors and the need for urban managers to implant risk amelioration strategies into the ways cities operate.