


4. ASIA PACIFIC CITIES SUMMIT



The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the 2003 Asia Pacific Cities Summit that was attended by the myself and Dr Lesley McTurk, from 20-22 October 2003, and held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Six hundred delegates attended this summit from 16 countries, representing 96 cities. The sheer diversity of participants ranged from Oecusse in East Timor, a city of 50,000 people, to Chongqing in China, a city of 31 million people.

The major topics covered were:

- Transforming urban sprawl
- Greening our cities
- Creating healthy communities
- Global-Local governance
- Alternative futures

The Summit was a unique opportunity for government and business leaders to explore the alternative futures of the city. These futures are based on the consequences of current trends as well as emerging issues that will impact on the current trajectory of the city.

The themes of the Summit were based on an environmental scan of the futures of the city. The themes moved well beyond the typical, immediate concerns of cities – the so called roads, rates and rubbish, to the issues at the core of creating sustainable cities and communities. The Summit encouraged wide ranging discussion on factors affecting city design, city policy making and city planning, including suburbanisation, globalisation, digitalisation, multiculturalism and global warming.

Delegates participated in plenary and interactive sessions with leading thinkers and theorists on city futures. These sessions were complemented by a wide-ranging series of practical workshops.

Civic leaders examined the challenges and drivers of change which are common to many cities throughout the Asia Pacific region, and developed "scenarios" for the preferred city of the future.

Summit Communiqué

At the conclusion of the Summit's Mayoral Forums, civic leaders identified and committed themselves to some basic requirements for the city of the future. A vision for the Summit City of 2020 was endorsed as the ideal scenario for the future city – a vision for all participating civic leaders to aspire to.

2003 Asia Pacific Cities Summit Communiqué

In this time of unprecedented demographic change, local governments are facing more challenges around the needs, aspirations and expectations of their citizens. People want the lifestyle offered by large, modern cities, along with the personal experiences and interaction of small village communities. With the increasing pressures of time constraints and the ease and speed of consumerism, the family unit is shrinking.

This dichotomy of values will result in dramatic changes in the ways that local governments engage with their constituents. Advances in technology, new models for community engagement and an increased capacity to envision a shared future will provide local governments with the opportunity to design a more inclusive process.

Summit delegates agreed that one of the most important roles of local governments was to promote diverse and tolerant communities and to foster equity of access to resources. The first wave of globalisation was economic, the second is a wave of labour from all around the world, making communities increasingly diverse.

Local governments need to lead the processes of conflict resolution, mediation and arbitration within their communities, to find a better balance between the rights of individuals and groups and the pressure of social advancement.

The Summit agreed that the basic rights – clean air, water, food, housing and mobility – were of primary concern to local governments and need to be prioritised in planning for the future of all citizens. Along with basic dignity, through meaningful work, we will ensure that cities become Clean, Green, people-friendly places where choices remain available for future generations.

Summit participants felt that the role of civic leaders was changing, with less of an emphasis on regulatory requirements and more involvement in bringing communities together and in managing change and achieving cohesion. The human face of the city is increasingly important in an age where overwhelming advances in technology can result in alienation from society and increasingly isolated individuals. The role of civic governance is to be human, how to maintain human-ness in an increasing technocratic world and to use technology appropriately and inclusively.

Vision 2020/Summit City Commitments

1. Strengthening the role and outcomes of Sister City relationships, to include technology, resource exchanges and capacity development.
2. Building consensus between all levels of government on key issues of environmental protection and the health of cities.
3. Creating a global association of local governments, to move towards cities as central to Global Governance, making the first steps towards a House of Cities.
4. Evaluate these issues on an ongoing basis at future summits, in particular the Summit of 2023, seeing visioning the future as an ongoing process.
5. Actively engage young people in the Summit process, with delegates bringing one young person from their city to the next meeting, to ensure that their views are heard and acted upon, especially as their experiences are being formed by different drivers for change.
6. Enhance volunteer participation in community capacity building in cities, in particular through local government workforces.
7. Investigate new ways to use technology to encourage participation of all citizens in local government decision making. For example, chat rooms, SMS messaging on the future vision for cities, e-democracy and so on.
8. Foster information sharing between local governments through range of expanded exchange programmes.
9. Focus on environmental education for young people, with a view to protecting the environment of the future.
10. Continue to measure the performance and outcomes of Asia Pacific Summits, to determine the most viable model for future city interactions.

Finally, a conclusion of the Summit was that a full record of the proceedings of the Summit and the outcomes agreed by Mayors should be placed in a time capsule, to be opened and presented to the Asia Pacific Summit of 2023, to determine progress on the Summit City Vision.

It was an honour to be at the Summit and both Dr McTurk and I feel that there are some real synergies we could develop in partnership with the City of Brisbane administration.