

East Asia Summit Conference on Liveable Cities

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Presentation by Mr John So, Mayor of Melbourne, Australia

Today I will speak about Melbourne's approach to sustainability.

I will also give you some key examples of ways in which we are ensuring our city's development as a major urban centre is sustainable into the future.

Melbourne is the capital of the State of Victoria and the second largest city in Australia.

Our current population is 3.7 million and we have the nation's fastest population growth.

The City of Melbourne – the municipality for which my Council is responsible - consists of the CBD and immediate surrounding suburbs, and it has a resident population of 77,000, and a daily visitation of 720,000.

Melbourne is an important national and Asia Pacific business and economic centre with growing influence.

Major industries include education, retail, biotech and financial services.

Emerging industries include fashion, design and clean technology.

Melbourne is the world's 6th most important biotechnology centre, a globally significant funds management centre and home to 5 of Australia's 10 largest companies.

We also have the largest container port in Australia.

We enjoy a unique city landscape – with river frontage, a major Docklands precinct on the bay, and large parkland spaces in the city centre.

Melbourne's mix of culture, low cost of living, job opportunities and green spaces has seen us voted world's most liveable city 3 times in last decade by The Economist.

The reason I am providing such detail about our city, is to establish what is at stake if we do not become more sustainable in our way of life.

The climate is changing, putting stress on the natural environment and our water sources.

More and more people use the city every day posing serious challenges in terms of transport access, pollution, waste, energy use and carbon emissions.

We want Melbourne to remain one of the world's most liveable cities, but to be liveable we must be sustainable.

The two go together.

Since 1997, the City of Melbourne has built sustainability into city planning and operations – our goal is to provide world's best quality of life for all citizens, now and in the future.

There are five principles that we consider being the major components for achieving liveability and sustainability.

The first is Local Character

As urban architecture and branding goes global, it is becoming increasingly important for cities to protect their local identity and retain a point of difference.

We need to retain our city's distinctive identity – that's what attracts visitors and satisfies residents.

We make an effort to make Melbourne look like Melbourne, taking advantage of its unique characteristics.

Heritage controls have been essential to retaining our physical history, heritage and identity.

The second principle is Connectivity

Connectivity is the glue that holds a city together.

Good connectivity in Melbourne has improved access and movement within and out of the city.

A comprehensive network of walking, running and bike paths are driving a shift to sustainable transport.

Well defined places of work, entertainment and leisure – coupled with good quality public facilities – are helping communities members to connect with one another.

The third principle is Density

By increasing the concentration of population and activity in central urban areas, we reduce vehicle usage, pollution and carbon emissions.

Higher density living also:

- reduces the consumption of land, preserving public space
- reduces distances travelled and traffic congestion
- improves efficiency of infrastructure and promotes public transport
- and it reduces energy consumption.

The fourth principle is Mixed Use

Ensuring a diversity of accommodation, businesses and infrastructure is the cornerstone of healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

Mixed use offers people convenience, choice and opportunities to build a sense of community.

It reduces dependency on cars, encourages more walking and cycling, increases the viability of local businesses and reduces crime.

If we think and live local, the environment and the community will thank us.

The 5th and final principle is High Quality Public Realm

We all like to live in a place that is clean, green, welcoming and safe.

A high quality urban environment attracts people, increases economic performance and encourages activity at street level.

It builds community pride by getting people in public places and improving social interaction.

In Melbourne we've planted trees and potted plants, improved streetscapes, created new public spaces and we've improved pedestrian lighting.

And we welcome interesting, unique business enterprises.

Our city is not only a great place to work, when you leave the office you have every kind of leisure, dining and entertainment option on your doorstep.

Back in 1997, with these 5 principles to guide us, Melbourne made sustainability a core consideration in city planning.

The City of Melbourne has set an ambitious environmental target of zero net emissions for the whole municipality by 2020.

The City's Zero Net Emissions Strategy guides our decisions and our operations.

It has changed the way we view return on investment.

We now purchase green energy, produced from renewable sources.

We buy 40% Green Power for street lighting and 20% for Council's main buildings

We also invest in emerging technology, thereby creating a local 'clean technology' industry.

The City is currently trialing the 'active reactor', groundbreaking energy-efficient street lighting engineered by a local technology company.

Two years ago we completed the construction of CH2, Australia's greenest office building.

Winner of United Nations design awards, it has become an international case study in sustainable urban development.

Home to city employees, it uses natural light and ventilation to create an inviting and productive workplace.

Its smart design reduces energy use and emissions by over 80%, saving Council over \$1 million annually.

With an estimated environmental technology payback period of just 7 years, it has also persuaded other governments and business to do the same.

Melbourne is now home to a growing number of 6-star buildings.

In 2003, we installed over 1300 solar panels on the roof of the city's largest market, Queen Victoria - the largest solar grid of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

It generates 250,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year, which compensates significantly for the Market's electricity use.

All new council buildings are now being designed to achieve maximum energy efficiency ratings.

To ensure city developers follow our lead we have embedded energy efficiency rating systems into planning and building regulations.

We have made international best practice a minimum requirement.

We also work directly with managers of existing offices, apartments and hotels to improve their bottom line and performance.

Council has established a trust fund to invest in efficiency measures, plus we offer grants and reduced cost loans to encourage adoption of more efficient technology and systems.

Our greatest current challenge is the reduction of emissions created by city buildings.

Energy use in residential and commercial buildings accounts for 95 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions from the municipality.

CH2 demonstrates what is possible in the construction of new buildings, but we need to improve the performance of *existing* building stock to make a difference.

With that goal we have programs in three main areas:

- education of city users, particularly hotels, in energy and waste reduction
- changes to planning regulations
- and a partnership with the Clinton Climate Initiative to develop financial models for retrofitting of old buildings

The last point is critical to us reaching the zero net emissions target.

Melbourne has formed strategic relationships with many international sustainability groups.

We are working with other cities to share knowledge, influence change and develop solutions with global impact.

What we learn at home dealing with Australia's specific challenges we are keen to share.

Through knowledge sharing we alert other cities to the impacts of emissions far away from the source.

We joined ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection program in 1998.

ICLEI provides practical tools and support to city governments across the world.

Joining gave us a solid framework for establishing greenhouse reduction targets similar to the Kyoto Protocol – well before the Australian government ratified.

We are a central panel member of the C40 Cities climate leadership group.

Through C40 we struck an agreement with the Clinton Climate Initiative, giving us direct access to research and development.

We have also adopted the Energy Efficiency Building Retrofit Program.

The program provides cities and private building owners with access to lower cost funds for retrofitting existing buildings with energy efficient products.

This program brings together four of the world's largest energy service companies, five of the world's largest banks, and sixteen of the world's largest cities.

It is a landmark program which realises energy savings of up to 50%.

There are many other sustainable development initiatives underway in our city.

From recycling water to the creation of safe pedestrian and bike paths, we are looking at every aspect of Melbourne life and assessing its impact on sustainability.