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better decisions



ADC Forum (Founded as the Australian Davos Connection) is a not-for-profit leadership organisation founded in 1996 by the Australian members and participants of the World Economic Forum.

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Rapid population growth could undermine city liveability

With population set to double within 40 years, better strategic leadership is needed now if Australian cities are to remain amongst the most liveable in the world.

“Population growth brings many positive social and economic impacts. However, better strategic planning and management is needed if we are to avoid the negative externalities – such as transport congestion, unaffordable housing, health impacts, and overloading of amenities and social services – beginning to outweigh the benefits,” ADC Forum Chief Executive Anton Roux said.

Australia’s population is growing faster than almost any other developed nation’s, increasing by more than 300,000 last year. According to the ABS, around two-thirds of recent growth is from overseas arrivals. The vast majority of those arrivals settle in our largest cities.

A major summit takes place in Melbourne next week to build consensus on what needs to be done to ensure our cities remain healthy and liveable as they deal with rapid growth.

“Migration is a rich source of new ideas and new international linkages. With some of the world’s most liveable cities, Australia is a highly desirable destination, able to attract some of the best mobile talent,” Mr Roux said.

“However, poorly managed rapid growth places pressure on the very things that make us so internationally competitive – affordable housing, transport, utilities, social services, and amenities such as shopping, recreation facilities, and green space.

“As we have seen overseas, and in Europe in particular, negative growth impacts can also undermine public confidence in migration and lead to weakening social cohesion and diminishing support for policies of openness and engagement.

“We need better strategic planning to ensure we do not risk losing the economic and social benefits of strong migration-led growth, as our cities start to strain.

“Rapid population growth is manageable if we develop and implement the social science, the right design and planning methodologies, and infrastructural and institutional capacity to do it well. If we get those right, we can ensure population growth delivers economic benefits and industrial expansion. We can not only drive successful expansion of our existing cities, but we could also develop a globally competitive metropolis in Australia’s north to rival Hong Kong or Singapore, to unlock our northern potential.

“Our cities are already under pressure. The time to create and actively lead a strategic vision for our future cities is now, if we want vibrant, dynamic, healthy and sustainable Australian cities that remain among the best places in the world to live,” Mr Roux said.

ENDS

ACN 085 852 848
ABN 65 085 852 848
PO Box 18058
Collins Street East VIC 8003
Australia
Tel: +61 3 8689 2300
Fax: +61 3 9650 4641
Email: adcforum@adcforum.org
Web: www.adcforum.org

Founder

Michael Roux

Board of Directors

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Note: Summit details and media attendance

Media are invited to attend and cover the summit, by requesting media accreditation for the event by email to adcforum@adcforum.org.

Creating Healthy Cities Summit details are as follows:

When: 30 November-1 December 2015
Where: RACV City Club
501 Bourke St Melbourne

International keynote speakers include:

- Richard de Cani, MD: Planning, Transport for London
- Prof Robert Cervero, Chair of Urban Studies, University of California, Berkeley
- Howard Duncan, Executive Head, Metropolis Project, Ottawa

Australian speakers include:

- Hon Paul Fletcher, Federal Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects
- Hon Anthony Albanese, Shadow Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
- Hon Richard Wynne, Victorian State Minister for Planning
- Hon David Davis, Victorian State Shadow Minister for Planning
- Rt Hon Robert Doyle, Lord Mayor of Melbourne
- Philip Davies, CEO, Infrastructure Australia
- Jim Betts, CEO, Infrastructure NSW
- Peter Brain, Executive Director, National Institute of Economic and Industry Research
- Rohan Mead, CEO, Australian Unity
- Prof Jago Dodson, RMIT University
- Prof Michael Buxton, RMIT University
- Jerril Rechter, CEO, VicHealth
- Prof Mark Stevenson, University of Melbourne
- Prof Billie Giles-Corti, University of Melbourne
- Prof John Stanley, University of Sydney
- Prof Roz Hansen, Chair, Plan Melbourne Refresh Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Meredith Sussex, Chair, Fisherman's Bend Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Rhett Simonds, CEO, Simonds Consolidated

For further information or to arrange comment please contact:

Luke McMahan
Director of Communications
0431 743 151

About ADC Forum

ADC Forum is an independent, cross-sectoral Australian think-tank, bringing to bear strategic expertise in an open, dynamic development architecture to expand and improve our world through insights and practical solutions, opening opportunities and renewing fields of human endeavour.

By developing capacity for business, government, universities and civil society to jointly contribute to building a resilient global system, ADC Forum will be integral to shaping our shared future in the Asian Century.