
**RESPONSE TO
"CLARE RESIDENTIAL AND CENTRE PLANNING STUDY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS REPORT"**

Overview

Whilst it is acknowledged that the report is focused on "strategic directions" a number of important aspects have been excluded. In addition, the "analysis" of various elements of the study is brief and incomplete - e.g. infrastructure. There is too much "analysis" of population and retail and insufficient assessment of what is **actually** happening in Clare. There are several contradictory statements, and in my opinion there is an absence of a local "feel" of the dynamics of Clare.

Generally, the strategic directions described in Chapter 10 are supported however they do not go far enough. We are living in an age of increasing uncertainty, and what the future holds for Clare in global terms should be articulated in greater depth.

The following issues have not been included in the report.

- Climate change impacts and the effects these will have on the urban environment
- Potential diminution of supply of water from a Murray River system in terminal decline – this will impact on the availability of reticulated water for Clare
- Energy availability – greater disruptions are predicted to occur in the future in both electricity and liquid fuels.
- Transport routes – is planning for removal of heavy vehicles from Clare's Main North Road a priority for the future?

Specific comments

- 1 The narrow focus of the report - i.e. population growth and retail demand – diverts attention from critical issues described above. Climate change predictions, energy availability and price, and water supply are three crucial aspects that will affect the urban form of the future. These should be accounted for.
- 2 The persistent thought of Clare as "a major regional centre" is misguided in my view – Clare is just 1 hour's drive from 3 regional centres, and it would be folly to maintain this focus at the expense of creating a resilient and sustainable local community. Sure, work towards supporting local enterprises, but use local knowledge to develop strategies that are relevant.
- 3 In 2000, I prepared a "Clare Rented Housing Investigation" report, which contained considerable information that would have been useful for future planning. Unfortunately, this report never saw the light of day. Suffice to say, substantial analysis of population trends for Clare was covered, together with in-depth assessment of building approvals. 25 conclusions were also described.

- 4 A weakness in the Strategic Directions Report (SDR) is its "Demographic Analysis". It goes to great length to say that Clare's population will increase just marginally by 2022 (refer 3.4) – to 3266 – yet is contradictory (4.3) when building approvals statistics are applied to yield a predicted population of 3960. It is this latter figure that is more than likely to occur, and therefore substantial impacts will arise accordingly. My assertion is based on previous research. In my opinion the SDR has not looked closely enough at historical figures and trends – my report of 2000 arrived at a different conclusion and my estimation of 3200 for year 2000 (prior to the 2001 Census) was close to the Census figure of 3112 in 2001. Remember, Clare's population was just 2391 in 1991 and increased to 2815 in 1996. This is a very substantial increase. Based on dwelling approvals in the intervening period to the present, the population is most likely to have already exceeded the SDR prediction for 2022. The figure can be tested by examining dwelling approvals more closely. In addition, to gain a deeper understanding of population trends, I suggest that a voluntary questionnaire to new dwelling owners be offered seeking for example, number of persons in the proposed house, and where they have come from.
- 5 ABS statistics need to be treated with caution, as should national demographic trends. The shift of population out of cities began in the 1990's and is continuing today. Local knowledge is indispensable in this regard – ABS figures for LGA's is unsatisfactory for predicting Clare's future population trends.
- 6 Whilst the report states that Clare's population is ageing, it also states that "there will be a corresponding drop in school age children" and uses projections to 2022 to support this. An examination of historic and present school enrolments – including the increasing number of students who derive their daily education in other towns – would most likely confirm otherwise.
- 7 "ABS statistics estimate a dramatic increase in the number of people over the age of 60 and a corresponding drop in the number of younger children" (3.8).
ABS statistics do not now have the ability to study at the micro (town) level in rural areas. Consider the following.
An ageing population can also bring with it a younger workforce to provide the services that support the aged. There is also a natural turnover of businesses (albeit slow) from older to younger people. And what do we know of the migration of older people from the town and the consequent relocation to Clare of younger people?
The report relies too much on ABS figures and not on local information. And this brings me to the point that if we want to know what the population trends are, then better record-keeping and information-gathering needs to occur. For example – take the statement "Council staff **estimate** that approximately 75% of total approvals relate to Clare ..." (4.1). This information should not be estimated but actually derived from figures – it's not difficult, it only needs a system to be established (as I recommended in my report of 2000 for dwelling approvals). The dissection of building approvals at the local level is necessary to understand what future infrastructure and business development requirements are likely to be, and planning can thus be carried out with greater confidence.
- 8 The assessment of the current land supply (4.2) is incomplete. Again, in my 2000 report I identified 7 sites for medium density residential development – it would be an advantage to review these again. In addition there are other sites that have not been included in the SD Report – for example, the remaining land at Coach House Estate, and the opportunity presented by the Transport SA depot land. Contrary to the SDR, a part of Earle's land does have potential for medium density housing, as does a part of Inchiquin Homestead land.
The conclusion to this point is that the SDR needs to be reworked to account for better statistical data and population trends, and account for all land that is available.

- 9 The Infrastructure Analysis (5.0) is merely a statement, not an analysis. It is lacking in detail. A critical issue for the wastewater treatment plant is how soon the design population figure of 4000 will be reached. What would the SDR say if it used the figure of 3960 instead of the ABS prediction of 3266 in 2022? The WWTP will be under-sized and will not have adequate future capacity.

What about hydraulic modelling of the STED pipe system to actually determine (i.e. analyse) its future capacity? This is a critical issue and one that I understand still has not been done.

What about other vitally important aspects such as transport links, planning for a bypass to remove heavy vehicles from Clare's shopping precinct, electricity capability, broadband and telephone capability, recreational/open space requirements?

The natural environment does not get a mention in "Infrastructure". Sustainable communities exclude the natural environment from the urban development framework at their peril. Everything is connected.

- 10 The "Retail Analysis" section (6.0) is confounding, mainly because there is an attempt to relate Clare to other much larger rural towns in SA. It is inappropriate to compare Clare with Gawler – the two have very different populations and different local economies. It's a bit like comparing Burra with Clare – it is basically meaningless.

However I will give the SDR its dues – it supports the notion (6.6) that in retail terms Clare will remain a "District Centre" and not a "Regional Centre" – it just doesn't have the population catchment. Therefore, let's remove "Regional Centre" from Council's Strategic Plan and focus on creating a sustainable District Centre.

Retail analysis in Clare can only be performed at the micro level involving each and every business and the opportunities that they foresee. Was this done for the SDR?

In addition to the Car Parking Contribution (which should be determined from actual costs and not involve subsidisation from the general community), a Stormwater Drainage Contribution needs to be established. I have stated this on a number of occasions in past years.

- 11 The SDR acknowledges the "attractive landscape setting" (7.1) of Clare and that it needs to be protected (7.3). The natural environment is connected to tourism and is connected to business and is connected to the built environment, and so on ... an understanding that all things are connected needs to be emphasised in policy and strategy terms.

- 12 Development Opportunities (9.0) – Clare's present framework is an opportunistic if not contentious mix. There is a relatively high proportion of "Country Living" space which is stretching the urban framework and intruding on to agricultural land.

● A re-setting of the compass is necessary to preclude any further residential developments such as has occurred recently in Armagh. This development has changed the face of this "historic site" forever. It has also impacted on "first impressions" for visitors entering Clare valley from the west.

"Desired Future Character Statements" (8.3) would seem to be a step in the right direction.

● Comments at 8 above are re-iterated. There are more infill opportunities than have been identified in the SDR.

The Craig Hill Road/Main North Road reference recommendation (9.3) should be tested. I suggest that some of the land attached to the existing residential area could be appropriate for residential development – perhaps even medium density.

This area, combined with the residential land near the STEDS ponds, and the land on the south side at Inchiquin Homestead, would be candidates for medium density residential development, and would be more appropriate in terms of infrastructure and service delivery, location to shopping and transportation, than the proposed retirement village north of Clare.

This particular proposal (as advertised in a full page spread in Northern Argus, 14 June 2006) would virtually cause a "leapfrogging" of the residential area of Clare, a disconnectedness that has been identified in the SDR (10.6). The location of this proposal in a Rural Horticulture Zone, remote from the town itself (and in fact outside the town limits), is incompatible with good, logical, planning.

● Housing size and housing diversity – this issue will gain significantly greater importance in the future and needs to be acknowledged. Climate change, energy-efficient housing, the need to reduce waste and consumption, and the cost of living, will all impact on the urban framework. Council's Development Plan needs to keep abreast of these changes and have the capacity to adapt quickly.

The profligate use of resources and energy in our society today will rebound on us as a community. Actions taken now can achieve significant outcomes.

I understand that Council is a participant in "Cities for Climate Protection Australia Program". Council's fundamental responsibility in this regard is to reduce greenhouse gas, and to account for energy use and identify sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

Urban planning, transportation, and above all house design, are all vital players in the policy mix to drive the CCP agenda. The SDR makes no mention of this vitally important matter.

Conclusion

If there is uncertainty about particular directions that Council could/should take, then perhaps further investigations should be undertaken at the local level. The SDR does not evoke a local "feel" but instead tends to look outside Clare for answers. What are the views of the local representatives of the Steering Committee on this point?

In December 2003 I wrote to Council and the developer about the design of the Hanlin's Rise residential development. I stated –

"Three critical aspects have emerged today (as a result of excess consumption) and are applicable to residential development. These are water use, energy consumption, and land consumed for development. Today, it is clearly apparent that the community needs to conserve energy and resources, and I consider these to be essential design elements in any existing and new human habitats and systems.

In my view the proposed residential development (Hanlin's Rise) for Clare has a unique opportunity to provide excellence in design, and to introduce important principles that are described in "Good Residential Design SA".

I then described a host of design aspects that would have made the development much more compatible with sustainable development. Sadly, my voice was not heard and these simple design aspects were not implemented.

Today, more of the same is happening – it's as if people are totally oblivious to a future world that will be controlled by climate change. Climate change is now an irrefutable scientific fact.

[Tim Flannery's "The Weather Makers" should be essential reading to all urban policy makers and local government representatives].

So, where does Council's participation in "Cities for Climate Protection" fit into the agenda for future strategic directions?

Having only captured more salient issues from the SDR, I hope that I have made an objective contribution. There is much more that can be stated, but perhaps this should be left to Council's consultants and the Steering Committee to determine.

Sincerely

Des Menz

15 June 2006