

Contested places for Australia's capital city

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This paper argues that Canberra is the product of nineteenth-century conflict as the original colony of New South Wales separated into smaller entities. The rejection of republican ideals in preference for a "commonwealth federation" is explained, particularly leadership by Henry Parkes. The notion of a "neutral city" located in its own seat of government territory away from the commercial ports of Sydney and Melbourne constituted a political compromise that also shifted from British interpretation of "primate capital city" functions within an imperial hierarchy towards Australian re-application of the Washington model of a constrained "federal capital city". Subsequent conflict over various sites for the future capital included debate over water rights for the future city. Further conflict needed resolution after local engineers immediately challenged the first city design by Walter Griffin (1912). The Griffin street layout, gazetted in 1925, but substantially varied within two years to meet engineering problems, has been the target of many subsequent re-interpretations. Since 1927, evolution of a "national capital" vision has initiated major re-definitions of the roles of Canberra, with centralization of capital city authority strengthened during the Second World War and by post-war creation of the National Capital Development Commission. This expensive metropolitan vision changed with acquisition of self-government for the Australian Capital Territory in 1988 to follow a binary planning process shared by the Commonwealth and ACT Governments through the National Capital Plan (1990) and the ACT Territorial Plan (1993). Subsequent capture of some national roles by Sydney and a new metropolitan vision for Canberra, the Canberra Spatial Plan (2004), mark a further urban design change as a new interpretation of an Australian unitary state emerges.

The Early Primacy of Sydney

From 1788 until 1840, the nature of British imperial command over the convict function of New South Wales did not brook dissension from Crown authority. Mutinies were punishable. In such a climate, the port town of Sydney served as an outpost of London's dominant role as "metropolis" (literally, mother city) of a hierarchical and global system of commercial and military order. With the passage of time and the arrival of free settlers, elements of self-government were passed down the line and colonial dependence on commands from London lessened as other gateway ports opened and additional Australian colonies formed, but ultimate local responsibility remained with Whitehall offices of Crown government (and representative colonial governors) until implementation of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution on 1 January 1901.

Sydney's initial primacy was determined by territory. The first six resident governors in Australia commanded a predominantly maritime piece of British Crown jurisdiction as a naval command unprecedented in human history and amounting to a larger portion of the Earth's surface than the entire Alexandrine or Roman Empires (Figure 1). As heritage from Rome, the British Empire of the nineteenth century reapplied the notion of pyramidal power responsible for maintaining order throughout a unitary state or dominion as a Crown "possession" held by "occupancy" (Barlow, 1822). The legal fiction which on 2 April 1787 empowered the first governor, Captain Arthur Phillip, with total autocratic authority over "all the islands adjacent" to a new piece of British sovereign territory labelled "New South Wales" identified a clear western limit as longitude 135°E (extended to the 129th meridian in 1825), but no eastern oceanic boundary was ever set (Gammage, 1981).

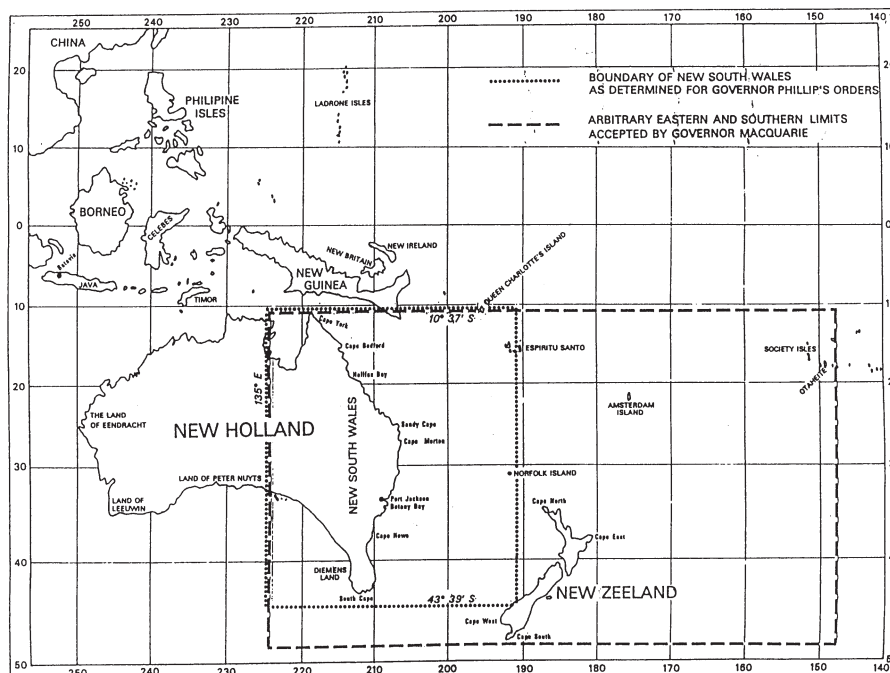


Figure 1: British conception of "New South Wales" and its "South Seas" orientation, plotted from instructions issued to the first governors of transported convict settlement, 1788-1811. The coastline follows James Cook's chart on a Mercator projection.

Until 1840, no alternative site challenged Sydney Town as the British administrative outpost in Australia. To broaden the colonial economic base, a series of inland surveys after 1819 opened the way for a set of lesser towns within two proclaimed counties and, from 1826, the local press began to identify Sydney as the future “metropolis of Australia”. However, because of geographical isolation, Van Diemen’s Land had been excised from New South Wales a year earlier as a separate penal colony. Geographical constraints applied as “Limits of Location” during 1829, as a restriction to the alienation of Crown land (Perry, 1963; Jeans, 1972), led to labelling of Sydney as a “seat of government” and to affirmation of its primacy according to a four-fold classification of urban places linked to pyramidal military order.

The Federal Model and Colonial Separation

Almost immediately, William Wentworth, a landholder with convict parentage, questioned the imperial command model and drafted more democratic constitutional proposals which borrowed the notion of a “perambulatory seat of government” from Canadian experience and the American pre-Union Continental Congress, but with a permanent upper house located in Sydney (*Australian*, 8 and 11 December, 1835). Nevertheless, Wentworth failed to sway the opinion of status-conscious free settlers (Macarthur, 1837), especially once the first Wakefield colonists had arrived in convict-free South Australia (1836) and Sydney ceased to be sole Australian mainland centre for Crown land administration.

Four years later, following surveys of several Bass Strait ports, the dilemma of colonial administration of an area larger than the entire American Union of the time, led to recommendation in London of further “separation” of New South Wales into three land administration districts to be controlled from gateway ports (Board of Land and Emigration Commissioners, 1840). Free settlers of the Port Phillip or “southern” district dispatched a claim for representative self-government, but, instead, the British Colonial Office provided them seats on an enlarged NSW legislative council. Although Sydney retained its administrative primacy, for distance reasons Melbourne’s claim for separate identity would not be silenced. Proclaimed a town in 1842 then granted a Church of England bishop in 1848, Melbourne found a highly articulate advocate of separation through the voice of the Reverend Dr John Dunmore Lang, leader of the Scottish immigrants.

Stimulated by his Presbyterian fund-raising experiences in USA during 1840, Lang articulated a republican case for separation of colonies into the “future America of the Southern Hemisphere” governed according to the democratic concept of “federal rights to territorial legislature chosen by themselves for themselves”. Lang quoted historical precedent for possible separation of Port Phillip by noting creation of Maryland as a free colony from the convict colony of Virginia and he drew parallels with the separation of North and South Carolina in 1729, to note that his proposed “Phillipsland” south of the Murray River occupied nearly twice the area of old Carolina and the distance between Sydney and Melbourne amounted to four times that between the Carolina capitals, Raleigh and Columbia (Lang, 1846, 381). In a second book, Lang developed an identical argument for colonial separation of “Cooksland” centred on Brisbane, with hopes of founding an Australian cotton industry (Lang, 1847).

Lang’s books, published in London, attracted ministerial attention. The Colonial Office, as Lord Grey’s despatch of 31 July 1847, set the scene for Australian constitutional debate for the next decade by offering a colonial union of the separate colonies through a federal assembly and a general supreme court, each subordinate to the primacy of imperial authority retained in London (Allin, 1909, p. 60; Ward, 1976, p. 292; Morrell, 1930, pp. 199-231). “Federal” clauses

only recognized representation as a consultative and not autonomous voice and did not support any republican removal of overriding powers from Crown jurisdiction or British parliamentary oversight. Grey remained committed to the pyramidal edifice of imperial unity. However, in the face of anti-Grey expressions of self-interest by the House of Lords and by parochial Australian chambers of commerce in Sydney, Adelaide, Geelong and Melbourne, federal clauses were removed prior to announcement of the proposed colony of "Victoria" during 1851. Meanwhile, Lang continued his promotion of a "United Provinces of Australia" but shifted his preference to Sydney as the future seat of federal government following a short imprisonment in Melbourne for financial impoverishment (Lang, 1852).

Rival Capital City Claims

Almost immediately, gold discovery strengthened Melbourne's capital city claims, as a boom town of unprecedented wealth. As first port of disembarkation from Europe, Melbourne's population swelled dramatically to exceed Sydney's population by 1860 and Melbourne remained Australia's largest city until the economic depression of 1895. For the Victorian-era sense of hierarchical order, Melbourne retained the rank size, the financial base, and, therefore, the prestige or status to request additional administrative power, preferably over all Australia. Because nearly 5% of all British imperial government revenue, as gold, passed through the port during the 1850s, Melbourne as the youngest city of the empire could not be ignored.

The Queen's prerogative enacted in 1859 for the constitution of "Queensland" completed the dismemberment of NSW. Effectively, the creation of five colonial capital cities, each as the headquarters for legislatures operating according to identical constitutions, left no exclusive historical or imperial functions for Sydney.

The commercial and economic saga of unresolved Melbourne-Sydney rivalry became the prime reason for ultimate choice of an alternative site for an Australian federal capital city. Without Melbourne's flush of good fortune, Sydney's claim to be the premier city might have remained unchallenged. Amongst other Sydney backers, Lang took offence to Melbourne's rise and upgraded his republican vision to appeal against British colonial exploitation under a "lust for empire" responsible for the outflow of Australian wealth, especially gold (Lang, 1850). To "cut the painter" from dubious imperial ties, Lang broke new ground to recommend the Washington model of federal capital city complete with a nationally chosen president, a federal supreme court, and a bicameral federal legislature of a house of representatives elected from the populace and a senate composed of equal numbers from provincial delegates. At first, Lang's advice won few supporters and faded when outbreak of the Crimean War (1854) introduced a colonial scare of Russian invasion in the Pacific but Lang's republicanism remained alive for the remainder of the century to provide a major source of conflict with established British ideas of government (Oldfield, 1999).

Lang claimed that topography and a limited population base dictated only seven federal provinces, larger than US state counterparts (Lang, 1852). Five years later (*Empire*, 30 January 1857), Lang added an eighth inland province, named "Riverina" after the South American "Entre Rios" (Figure 6), at a time when mention of the "seat of the federal system" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October, 1856) may have triggered Henry Parkes, a NSW political leader, to identify Albury as an appropriate location on "neutral ground" at the Murray River border to the rival colonies (*Empire* 8 November, 1856; Frappell, 1977). For various reasons Albury residents continued for the rest of the century to see their town as the future federal capital (Birtles, 2001).

Capital City of an Imperial “Commonwealth” Federation?

Stimulated by withdrawal of all British land troops from Australia during 1870, Lang reissued his federal republican vision, with Sydney as headquarters of an independent Australian maritime nation serving the Pacific region (Lang, 1870). Parkes’ speeches had previously shown some sympathy, but within the pyramidal structure of unitary federation under the Crown. To Parkes’ consternation, Melbourne’s ability to attract more immigrants and the faster economic growth of protectionist Victoria proved to be no temporary gold-rush phenomenon but a persistent frustration to his anticipation of superior international free-trade benefits for Sydney.

Throughout the 1870’s, Parkes’ endeavours to boost Sydney’s commercial prospects led to his careful redefinition of “Australasia” as part of the British Empire. Free trade had returned Sydney’s natural advantage as first call for trans-Pacific shipping to the North American west coast and annexation of British Columbia during 1871 had stimulated a Canadian dream of a British-funded transcontinental railway to Vancouver. Through Parkes, the NSW government in 1875 proposed British annexation of much of the western Pacific as maritime extension of the Empire (the Union Jack was unfurled over Fiji the previous year), to include New Guinea, New Britain, New Zealand, the Solomons, the New Hebrides, Marshall, Gilbert and Ellice Islands (*British Parliamentary Accounts and Papers*, 1876, lvi, p. 814). Whereas Governor Phillip’s second commission of 1787 may have suggested a precedent (Figure 1), Lord Carnarvon, British Foreign Secretary, remained preoccupied with overtures to Germany in support of expansion of Suez Canal trade with India. Imperial foreign policy lacked any Pacific interest. Still, Parkes could not set aside his vision of a port-centred Australasian empire bound together by unitary government “of a free commonwealth” similar to Canada and the new German Empire, according to principles of an imperial federation promoted in London by the Royal Colonial Institute amidst debates over “home rule” (Parkes, 1876).

A much more significant step towards federation proved to be the opening of Albury railway station in February 1881 (Figure 2). For the first occasion in Australian history, two colonial premiers appeared together publicly. Albury publicized its longstanding hopes to be the “federal city” and special trains demonstrated a new overland rail superiority to coastal shipping. Two years later, politicians and the press again celebrated railway “union” at the opening of a Murray River railway bridge at Albury, to complete the Sydney-Melbourne link, at different gauges to Albury.

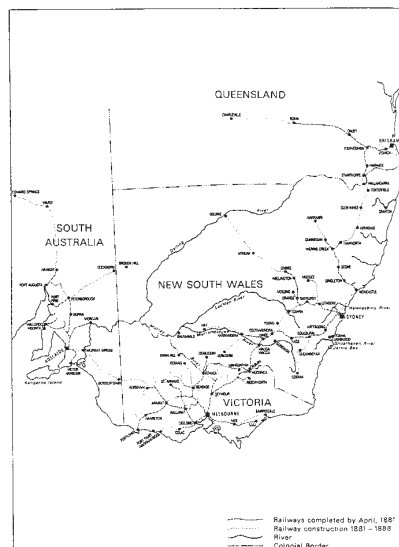


Figure 2: Railway construction, eastern Australian mainland colonies, 1851-1885. The engineering problems of bridging the Hawkesbury River delayed proposed rail connection between Sydney and Newcastle until 1889, but by 1881 overland rail had replaced coastal shipping as the fastest means of passenger and freight transport between Sydney and Melbourne. Rail gauge variations from colony to colony are not indicated.

Imperial Anti-Federalism and the Colonial Response

The questions of site and functions for a future federal capital for Australia resurfaced several times during various conventions leading to Federation, but with persistent anti-republican rejection of the Washington model throughout the 1880s. In London, parliamentary debates over home rule and an unsuccessful bill to establish an Australasian federal council demonstrated reluctance of English lords to transfer their traditional authority to a British imperial council which would include Welsh, Scottish, Irish and colonial delegates. Preference for the existing unitary Crown "commonwealth" headed by a monarch gained much wider credibility once Oxford professor, Albert Dicey, a constitutional lawyer and a key Liberal member of London's "intellectual aristocracy, demolished prevailing arguments favouring an imperial federation.

Dicey saw himself as public champion of British "Union" stability and his contribution to the first issue of the *Law Quarterly Review* (1885) attracted wide attention in Australia following reprint in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (28 February, 1885). Carefully distinguishing between "federal" and "unitary" government, Dicey dismissed federalism as "weak", "somewhat rigid and conservative" and over-involved with "legalism" due to its dependence upon written agreement and "the supremacy of the courts in interpreting the principles of that argument". Defining federalism as "a desire for union without unity – a combination of central government with local governments having a certain degree of independence", Dicey referred to the US experience of a "civil war of four years duration, the killing of a million people, and the spending of £100,000,000 to draw the line between federal authority and State sovereignty". A year later, Dicey reinforced his argument against federalism by his publication of *Law of the Constitution* (1886), the definitive study of British constitutional law until after 1914 and a major reference for preparation of the Australian Constitution during the 1890s.

Equally influential, Lord Bryce, Belfast-born Oxford professor of Roman law and a Liberal MP, supported Dicey's analysis by promoting Roman and British models of the unitary state, but with an inclination which favoured Irish home rule. Bryce's book, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), labelled as "bible of the Australian federal fathers" (Sawer, 1969, p. 24), remains significant for its clear reference to Queen Victoria's London as the basis for definition of the ideal primate capital city, "not only the seat of political government" but also, because of size and wealth, "the head and centre of the country, a leading seat of commerce and industry, a reservoir of financial resources, the favoured residence of the great and powerful, the spot where the chiefs of the learned professions are to be found, where the most potent and widely read journals are published..." (Bryce, 1888, 2, p 601).

In Australia, commercial promoters of Melbourne and Sydney could identify with Bryce, including his opinion that any capital city lacking primacy over other urban places faced exposure to constraints that might not necessarily be political but could include technological limitations as barriers to transport movement or geographical communication. As his example, Bryce commented upon the historical constraint imposed upon the urban growth of Washington by the financial hegemony of the New York stock market, Chicago's role as a railway node, and emergence of San Francisco as a west coast port. Philadelphia had surrendered to New York its status as the centre of art and opinion, while Boston had passed over its hegemony as "the chosen home of letters and culture". Bryce forecast that New York would retain "preeminence in population and commercial consequence" despite a westward shift of the centre of political gravity. He recognized the reasons for US "democratic" preference for locating federal and "subordinate" capital cities well away from possible urban commercial domination, but listed faults of federalism to include incompetence in legislative administration, laxity in public business management and an "insensibility" to the finer

responsibilities of national life" (Bryce, 1888, 2, pp. 465-6). A federal capital city could only accept the frequency of disputes between President, Senate and Congress, as well as absence of permanent leaders, if geographically isolated "safe from attack, safe even from menace" and hearing from afar "the warring cries of Europe races and faiths, as the gods of Epicurus listened to the murmurs of the unhappy earth spread out beneath their golden wings" (Bryce, 1888, 1, p. 303).

In Sydney, Parkes reinterpreted Bryce as his authority to contrast existing NSW colonial government with "that unequalled system of government which had been established in America" where the separation of powers permitted the President to serve as supreme head (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March, 1889). Perhaps, Parkes anticipated winning the presidential role himself (Parkes, 1889) and he proposed a convention of representatives from all colonial governments to draft a constitution for a "commonwealth federation". Nomination of Sydney in March 1891 as capital city of Australia proved unacceptable and a clause of the constitution left such determination to the future commonwealth parliament. Also, several undemocratic, despotic and "imperialistic" clauses of this constitution bill, largely inherited from Dicey, generated hostility from Australian republicans and the new Labor movement, which collectively backed disposal of Parkes' sixth and final ministry three months later.

Leadership of the federation movement passed to Edmund Barton, at Parkes' request (Bolton, 2000). Unable to bring the draft constitution to the attention of the NSW parliament, Barton turned to the public arena to encourage the formation of federal leagues in several country towns and foundation of the Australian Federation League in Sydney (July 1893). Through Barton's initiative, a joint conference of border leagues and Victorian branches of the Australian Natives Association assembled in Corowa, a border town near Albury, and promoted the highly significant new democratic principle that a national referendum as a direct vote by the people should form the primary consent for a commonwealth federation.

The principle appealed to George Reid, author of *New South Wales, the Mother Colony of the Australias* (1878), who emerged as NSW premier in August 1894, organised a Hobart premiers' conference on federal topics four months later, and, in December 1895, pushed an enabling bill through his parliament (legislative decisions repeated in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria). These actions meant that Australia would become the first nation ever to come into existence by a direct democratic process (a procedure followed most recently for East Timor). The referendums also freed Australian governments from direct rule from London, other than retention of a governor-general as Crown signatory similar to monarchical consent to decision from Westminster.

Conflict and Manipulation over Federal City Sites

Subsequent nominations of Sydney and Melbourne failed. By this time, notions of an independent seat of Commonwealth government territory similar to the District of Columbia had triggered claims from aspiring towns throughout the four colonies (Pegrum, 1983, pp. 25-31; Bennett, 1975, p. 5). Few aspirants looked beyond European examples of industrial or commercial capital cities, central to a commonwealth trading empire.

The issue of federal city location featured at a Melbourne conference of four premiers held during January 1899 to resolve a dilemma. The Commonwealth Constitution Bill had been accepted by Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania referendums (the Queensland and Western Australian governments did not support federation), but the majority vote recorded from NSW fell short of the required minimum, largely because Sydney had not been chosen as federal capital. To improve this majority, George Reid as NSW premier, successfully argued that a

decision to locate the territory within “the mother colony” would swing the NSW referendum balance (a result narrowly achieved a month later), but the premiers set a distance limit of “not less than one hundred miles from Sydney” as an added clause to the Constitution. The premiers also agreed that Melbourne would provide the federal seat of government until the new capital city became available.

The distance limit resulted in a decade of indecision. At first, Bombala featured as an alpine site, a choice believed to have been triggered by an extreme summer heatwave in Melbourne when the premiers met. The cool alps offered the respite advantages of an Indian hill station. Alpine preference for the Bombala district (“south Monaro”) emerged again in the report of Alexander Oliver, commissioned by NSW to examine 40 nominated sites. Disturbed by the grip of an unusually severe drought Oliver’s report rejected the proposed territorial size of 100 square miles as “too timid” for water supply to a city of at least 40,000 people (Oliver, 1900). Instead, Oliver redefined a territory ten times larger, with a city site on the Snowy River, a permanent watercourse. Oliver added the concept of an adjacent ornamental lake for emergency drought relief and he identified a possible coastal naval base (Eden) to be linked by rail (Scrivener, 1904).

Although Oliver’s recommendations were offered in April 1901 to Australia’s first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, the federal ministry became uneasy, largely because Lyne, the new Minister for Home Affairs, preferred the capital to be in his own electorate near Albury or the semi-alpine town of Tumut. To settle the issue, Lyne’s successor, Sir John Forrest, inspected 25 locations (Forrest, 1904). With the added prospect of hydro-electric power from the Snowy River, Forrest persuaded both federal houses to vote in favour of Dalgety, midway between Sydney and Melbourne, subsequently gazetted as the seat of Commonwealth government in April, 1904.

The federal choice lacked appeal to a newly elected NSW government led by Joseph Carruthers, partly because of Sydney Chamber of Commerce concern that Oliver’s proposed deepwater federal port of Eden might outrank Port Jackson. In addition, Carruthers had been reminded by Reid of specific rejection of a distance limit of 200 miles from Sydney (the distance to Dalgety) at the premiers’ conference of 1899. Carruthers withdrew the Dalgety site and ordered his engineers to explore prospects in the Yass district, closer to Sydney, with possible water supply to be piped from the proposed Burrinjuck Dam on the Murrumbidgee River. Prime Minister Alfred Deakin rejected Carruthers’ advice.

Ultimate choice, following reconciliatory action by the next NSW premier, Charles Wade, motivated further engineering assessment of the Canberra and Yass districts, offered in a new federal ballot of eleven sites. As the nomination of both houses, a new Seat of Government Act passed on 14 December 1908 identified “Yass-Canberra” as final choice (Pegrum, 1983, pp. 131-44).

Commonwealth survey advice regarding the location of the city (Scrivener 1909) rejected much of the district as too dry or windy and concentrated attention on the Cotter, Queanbeyan and Molonglo River catchments as a boomerang-shaped federal territory of 2630 km², with the Brindabella Range as western backdrop. This advice dismissed NSW engineering estimates of sufficient Cotter River water flow for a city of 850,000 (de Burgh, 1907; 1909) and insisted on access to more reliable water from the Queanbeyan River. Although the NSW government claimed retention of lands of the Queanbeyan catchment (including Queanbeyan town, all railway track and Captains Flat mines) in exchange for the Gudgenby and Naas catchments as a more compact territory (Figure 4), all water rights to the Queanbeyan River were surrendered to the Commonwealth when the seat of government territory was created on 18 October, 1909. Surveys of possible city sites identified options on the banks of the Molonglo River (Figure 4), with “Canberra” chosen on the advice of NSW engineers. Commonwealth staff then enlarged the site to accommodate a central ornamental lake (Scrivener, 1909).

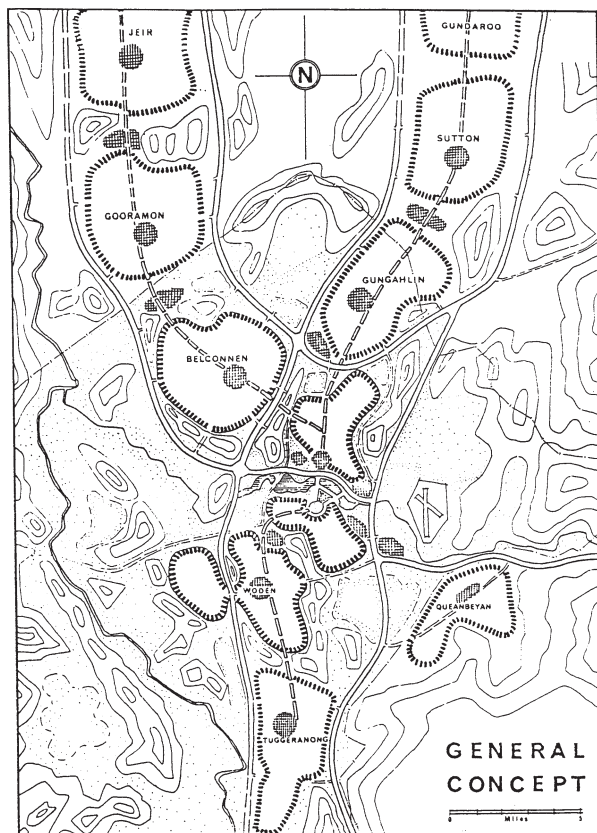


Figure 4: The National Capital Development Commission "general concept" for Canberra's metropolitan growth as satellite towns suggested that the city would extend across the NSW state border, 1968.

Designs and the Construction of Canberra

The first city designs emanated from Sydney and Launceston as radial patterns and then a well-publicized "cobweb" scheme (1909) by John Sulman (Reps, 1997: 13-14, Sulman, 1921). The door to a much wider range of ideas opened when a new federal Labor government announced an international competition for a city of 25,000 people (April, 1911). Award of first prize to Walter B. Griffin of Chicago lacked full support of the judging panel. Acceptance of Griffin's "premiated" design and its several revisions depended upon the federal government in office, with an unhappy Griffin dissociating himself from Canberra in 1920 (Groom, 1941: 141-151). Whereas the 1918 "final" form of the Griffin design was gazetted in November 1925 as Canberra's statutory plan, with focus on Capital Hill, almost all roads and place-names were amended within two years. Various elements of formal symbolism were discarded as deliberate choices based on expense reduction or engineering advice (Reid, 2002, Reps, 1997, pp 195-240, Harrison, 1995; Weirick, 1988, Freestone, 1986).

The prime ministership of Stanley Bruce (1923-29) redefined the federal role for Canberra by actively increasing the power of central government for national economic development as key functions as Parliament relocated from Melbourne (1927). Establishment of the Loans Council boosted federal government finances. Bruce initiated a pattern for future conservative governments that sought to create greater national unity through monetary policy whereas successive Labor governments attempted to reduce state government powers by the nationalization of various services appropriate to a unified welfare state. Throughout the Depression, in an era of coordinate federalism and fiscal equalization which reactivated states' rights movements, Canberra as a "bush capital" drew scathing criticism from across the country. Exorbitant running costs, triggered suggestions that either Melbourne or Sydney would serve as better capital city because of their commercial strengths. Relocation of various offices to Canberra resumed only as a hesitant trickle during 1935 and ceased again during the Second World War. Japanese attacks on Darwin and Townsville, with invasion of South-East Asian countries, destroyed the last vestige of Australian conceptions of its commonwealth federation as a "dominion" of the British Empire. During 1941, the Curtin government imposed a uniform Commonwealth income tax as a national priority over State taxes and as an action that changed the fiscal structure of Australian federalism irreversibly.

Under the subsequent umbrella of lasting acceptance of US global strategy (Edwards, 2001; Bell, 1997), Canberra acquired a wider range of functions, including a military airfield, five high frequency radio transmission stations and arrival of the first legations as heralds of Australian independence from London as a diplomatic base. Further identification of Canberra's "national capital" roles were triggered by the ministries of Robert Menzies (1949-66) who came to regard centralized capital city authority as the key to stronger government. Educated in a legal tradition which acknowledged the centralist constitutional theories of Dicey and Lord Bryce, Menzies accepted the latter's definition of centripetal and centrifugal forces operating within a federation. Menzies argued that "where powers are distributed between the National Government and State or provincial governments, there will develop either a movement, conscious or unconscious, to increase powers at the center, or an opposite movement to increase State or provincial powers at the expense of the central authority (Menzies, 1967, pp. 1-2).

Aware of the collapse of the Rhodesia/Nyasaland and West Indian federations and taking USA as his example, Menzies set Liberal Party directions against centrifugal or disjunctive notions of states' rights during a decade anxious about cold war prospects of political subversion by Communism (Menzies, 1967: 18-20). In doing so he allied Australia with prevailing US sentiment, including the ANZUS pact of 1951 (Menzies, 1970, pp. 50-55), and as early as May, 1954, gave Canberra sensational international prominence as the court for the Royal Commission on Soviet Espionage (Petrov inquiry). Menzies' domestic policies, including introduction of an extensive immigration scheme, encouragement of foreign direct investment, creation of the Commonwealth Trading Bank and substantial grants to education (including Commonwealth scholarships to universities), all increased the national influence of decisions from Canberra.

Parliament then appointed a Senate Select Committee with tasks to complete the transfer of a divided public service and to expand national roles. The Committee lengthened the list of future institutions to include a High Court for Australia, a headquarters for the Commonwealth Trading Bank, a national art gallery, a national theatre, a conservatorium of music, an opera house and a national museum (Australia, Parliament, 1955). The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) created during 1958, held unprecedented authority through direct access to the Prime Minister. It undertook the conversion of Canberra from a population of 36,000 into a polynuclear metropolis of 275,000 (1988) as Australia's largest inland city under "a scheme

continuous growth" (Morison and Hansen, 1968; Reid, 2002, pp. 223-323; Harrison, 1964; NCDC, 1965; Overall, 1995).

For city design, the NCDC restored elements of central unity of the Griffin plan. Its ultimate task, construction oversight of a permanent home for Australia's Parliament, completed Griffin's intention of Capital Hill focus. In addition, British "new town" interpretations of residential neighbourhood and decentralized land development were blended with imported US skills for "car reliant" retail provisions and transport planning collectively responsible for a metropolitan growth strategy or Y-plan (Figure 4) not unlike Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model of self-sufficient satellite towns separated by ridges or "green belts" (Howard, 1902; Harrison, 1968; National Capital Development Commission, 1965, 1971). Closure of the NCDC (1988) followed Commonwealth legislation for self-government of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Cutting from the Commonwealth Purse

Election of the first ACT Legislative Assembly (May, 1989), allowed the Commonwealth Government to withdraw from everyday costs of city management, but it remains Crown landlord, responsible through a *National Capital Plan* (National Capital Planning Authority, 1990) for the overall leasehold land use structure of the ACT. Through a *Territory Plan* (ACT Planning Authority, 1993), the ACT Assembly is accountable for all metropolitan services on a cost recovery basis. Both plans anticipate expansion of the city to 500,000 people and include awareness of the counterurbanization trend of an increasing number of daily commuters resident in a "dormitory zone" beyond the ACT border (Birtles, 1990; Birtles and Gordon, 1991).

The 1990s marked a transition in the economic foundations of Canberra towards industrial diversification and active promotion of multi-million dollar private enterprise investment, coincident with drastic downsizing of the Commonwealth public service across Australia and privatization of many government services. At the same time, the ministries of both major federal parties responded to the challenges of a more interactive and volatile global economy by reduced regulation of offshore investment, as a redefinition of Australian sovereignty in the Asia-Pacific region. Such financial restructuring has lifted Sydney to "world city" status attractive to relocation of most major Australia business headquarters from Melbourne. The Sydney Stock Market, the Australian Reserve Bank, branches of multinational banks and financial houses, also in Sydney, possess primacy roles which Canberra will never match – one reason for the current Prime Minister's decision not to reside in Canberra but Sydney as Australia's commercial capital city. Lord Bryce's Victorian-era definition of a primate capital city has acquired increasing relevance to suggest prospects of a Sydney-Canberra binary relationship.

Australia's further drift toward a unitary state follows creation of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 1992 as a new watershed process of creeping regulatory centralization (Stewart, 2000). Through COAG, state governments have traded various sovereign powers for a share of increased Commonwealth revenue subsequently generated through a national goods and services tax (GST). Virtual doubling of the area of Australia through ocean shelf and island entitlement under Law of the Sea conventions has added enormous Commonwealth government maritime responsibilities outside state three nautical mile offshore territorial limits. Whereas the resultant enlarged unitary state might have been of material benefit to office construction in Canberra or Sydney, the Howard ministries, through a combination of centralization and increased privatization policies since 1966, have encouraged a more amorphous distribution of Commonwealth responsibilities in the state capital cities. High-speed electronic communication now allows a more peripatetic Cabinet to meet in different cities and

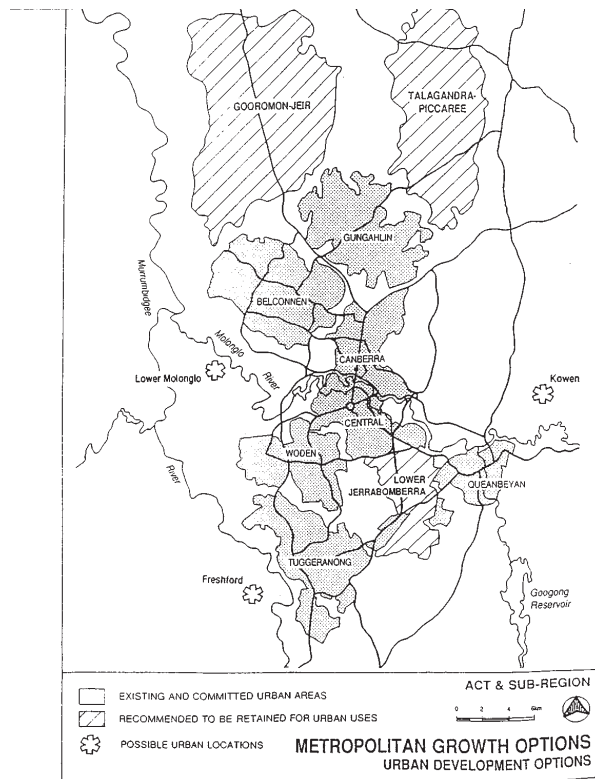


Figure 5: Metropolitan growth options suggested in the draft ACT and Sub-Region Planning Strategy, 1995, identified two future NSW cities of Gooromon-Jeir (250,000) and Tallagandra-Piccaree (150,000) but the proposal is ignored by the new ACT Spatial Plan which reopens the options of Lower Molonglo and Kowen as satellite cities once rejected for liable pollution of the Molonglo River. The prospect of a joint city of Lower Jerrabomberra (60,000) was discarded because of airport proximity.

to interact at a distance with the seat of government in Canberra. This new definition of national capital city has reduced the significance of geographical location.

In such an environment, the ACT Labor government has reacted protectively. Retreat from a long-term planning strategy (Figure 5) developed cooperatively with nearby local government councils (ACT and Sub-Regional Planning Subcommittee, 1995) for transborder metropolitan expansion is suggested by its release of a draft Canberra Spatial Plan to “contain” growth within the ACT (ACT Planning Authority, 2003; Savery, 2003). Announced amalgamation of NSW local government councils has also created a super-region, the “Capital City Region”, which surrounds much of the Australian Capital Territory as a top-down direction from NSW Labor government (Stanley, 2003). The Canberra Spatial Plan, to be implemented in 2004, makes much mention of economic and environmental sustainability, including limits to water availability, but has rejected likelihood of metropolitan growth beyond the ACT and makes no forecast to take account of the increased powers of national government. However, recent decision to build a new Australian Defence Force headquarters just outside the ACT may have already contested the Spatial Plan.

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