



press clip

Push to expand capital's borders

By John Thistleton
Business Editor

An expert planning strategist says international infrastructure companies should build three new cities of 300,000 along the Sydney-Canberra corridor and connect them with high-speed rail.

This was the logical way of accommodating the estimated Australian population of 35 million people by 2050.

Economist and futurist Brian Haratsis also advocates a wider ACT boundary to exploit Canberra's infrastructure so it can handle a population of one million people.

He expects Australia to break the mentality of continuing to expand established cities to handle population growth as the nation expands.

Developing a Sydney-Canberra corridor economy would meet multiple objectives including high-speed rail, a health hub to cope with a tripling of hospital beds across the nation and a second Sydney airport.

"You would connect a new major hospital around Bowral, seriously look at a second airport, whether it is Canberra or another airport between Sydney and Canberra.

"The planning for it would be now and it would happen between

2025 and 2050 because Sydney Airport gets to capacity around 2025 on BITRE [Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics] aviation forecasts."

Mr Haratsis, founder and chief executive of national strategic consultancy MacroPlan Australia, said high-speed rail was caught in a hiatus of how the nation's future structure would develop. "If it is an obscenity to double the size of Sydney, which I think it will be, then you have to say if we are to change, we have to build infrastructure."

CRC for Rail Innovation chief executive David George said in infrastructure planning there was a general understanding the time was right for high-speed rail. Much had happened since it was last seriously examined. Its speeds were higher, the technology was well established and more and more countries were looking at it.

Mr Haratsis said planning for 35 million people could not be done through the Council of Australian Governments process, which suffered from states' self-interest.

Meeting infrastructure needs, such as water supply, would need a

new, broader approach. "The main question when contemplating a 50 per cent increase in today's population was where you put people and why you put them there."

Mr Haratsis, the author of *Australia 2050 - Collaborative Nation and City Building*, said as a commercial analyst he was looking at these issues daily.

Baby boomers would begin retiring this year, doubling the number of pensioners in Australia by 2025.

"Of those people, only 30 per cent will be fully superannuated, and the question for them is if they will have to sell their home and cash out."

Sydneysiders aged over 50 were already selling their homes and moving to the Hunter and Illawarra, a trend that would continue into the Hume corridor with high-speed rail.

While the Government's first and second intergenerational reports estimated spending on health and ageing would rise 300 per cent in coming years, the number of taxpayers per aged person would halve in the next 15 years.

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Mr Haratsis said population growth and economic development were needed to maintain today's standard of living.

Australia's development would be determined more by integrated global supply chains and freight

logistics than the old colonial port cities mentality.

The book-ends for the Sydney-Melbourne corridor were already in place with freight moving out to the M7 freeway in Sydney's west and at Laverton in Melbourne.

"If planning is done now and high-speed rail is done in sections, the Sydney-Canberra corridor would be the most common sense outcome you could think of in Australia. It defies belief that we haven't moved ahead with it."



ADVOCATE:
Brian Haratsis
wants change.