



Mr Stephen Timms
Meridian Urban

Planning Utopia? Who needs a line of sight anyway!

Rob Sitch's satirical view of infrastructure planning in Australia gives planners the opportunity to laugh at ourselves openly, because satire is: 'based on truth or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues'. The TV series 'Utopia' portrays exactly what happens without clear direction, commitment to long-term planning and above all a line of sight – the WHY we do what we do.

Stephen and Julie will discuss the precarious route of unaligned planning from vision (or lack thereof) to approval and the bumpy ride that ensues. Real examples from our experience in Qld, NSW, NZ, the UK and other places will be examined to discover smooth sailing down the line or the obstacle course of ad hoc policy and lack of strategic vision. The presentation will focus on the importance of front-loading planning with excellence in strategic vision and community understanding. The benefits which arise from strategically-led planning stretch from community confidence to transparent governance and cost savings for legal proceedings. The flip side: ad hoc decisions, unclear policy and decision-making, community unrest, and lots of work in the courts.

Planning for Australian cities and regions must rise above the politics, be steadfast in its vision, and transcend political cycles at all levels. Planning must be collaborative across disciplines, strategically led, informed by the community, be simple to understand and create clear and consistent decision-making and funding opportunities from start to finish.

Do we need a line of sight? Unless we want to live in Rob Sitch's Utopia – Of course we do!

