Sustainable futures

What really happened at Rio+20, and what now for Australia?

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Some historical perspectives:

• Rio Earth Summit 1992 - Conventions e.g. Climate Change & Biological Diversity and Agenda 21
• Post Rio in Australia – Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, ratification of Conventions, Local Agenda 21, Cities for Climate Protection, etc.
• Johannesburg 2002: World Summit on Sustainable Development – Type II Partnerships to achieve Millennium Development Goals, World Fisheries Restoration Agreement, etc.
ICLEI World Congress:

- Peak body ICLEI - Local Government for Sustainability since early 1990s.
- Over 1400 delegates at Congress in Belo Horizonte in week before Rio+20
- Covered eight key sustainability themes with an emphasis on cities
- In parallel International Urban Research Symposium linking practitioners-researchers
- Major Output of Congress was communiqué for delivery to Rio+20 and world leaders
**UNCSD Rio+20:**

- Based around themes of (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development
- Formal resolution endorsed *The Future We Want* and yet ‘light on’ in relation to local government
- Of relevance to universities was declaration on higher education in pursuit of sustainable development
- Main local government event was ICLEI hosted and facilitated Global Town Hall over five days

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**Australian Government:**

- Provided several briefing sessions for Australian stakeholders, including opportunities for Q&A without notice, and PM Julia Gillard addressed two of these meetings
- PM Gillard accepted invitation to co-chair Millennium Development Goals Advocates committee
- Australian Government announced funding for Coral Triangle Initiative, Pacific Oceanscape Framework and launch of Indigenous Sea Managers Network
- Missed opportunity to cover need for focus sustainability through cities and towns
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Some next steps for Australia:

• Broader theme of sustainability for cities and towns needs to be pursued across all levels of government
• Local government key role needs to be supported
• Action for green growth, renewable energy, innovation in built environment and regional collaboration
• Intergovernmental and ministerial agreements
• Public-private partnerships and stronger links with higher education
• TBL and QBL assessment frameworks and tools to integrate sustainability into planning and operations