

Clouds over the Sunshine States? The Demise of Growth Management in Florida and Queensland

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Notwithstanding the distance separating them and differences in terms of the planning regimes, central-local government relations, and patterns of urban/local politics, the states of Queensland, Australia and Florida, USA, have distinct similarities in terms of physical characteristics such as geography and climate as well as population growth trends, development history and structure. Both states are late bloomers and both are experiencing higher than average growth rates within their respective countries as a result of being desirable tourism and retirement destinations, both of them have very fragile environments and potentially growing vulnerability to climate change. Similarly, both tried to cope with the development pressures they face through the adoption and implementation of growth management programs.

For two and a half decades after its introduction in 1985 development in Florida was governed by the Growth Management Act (GMA) whereas in Queensland state developed regional plans provided the framework for managing the rapid growth in the noughties. While Florida's GMA established a state oversight of local planning and required consistency between plans, Queensland regional plans required any local plans, policies and codes that relate to the region to reflect and align with the regional plan. The last couple of years brought a parallel change to both of these frameworks. In Florida state oversight of local development has been revoked whereas a change in government in Queensland removed all growth management elements from the regional plans.

This paper compares the urbanization and planning in the two sunshine states of Florida and Queensland highlighting the similarities and differences, evaluates how effective the growth management programs have been, and examines the recent changes and the challenges they bring to the respective states.