Preface

For many years now we have been working at the interface between academic research about people, the environment and cities and the real-world application of theories and tools to improve the way cities, and parts thereof, are planned. Most of this work has been in our home city of Melbourne, Australia, but we have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to look in some detail at a large number of cities at various stages of development, across most continents, and have developed some great friendships with people actively engaged in seeking to improve the lives of citizens in those places. Roles in advising the current and recent past Victorian Governments about desirable long-term land use transport planning futures for Melbourne challenged us to think deeply, in a somewhat Rumsfeldian fashion, about what we knew, what we did not know, who might know what we did not know and what no-one knew! More seriously, it has provided us with a chance to think a little about what might make a difference for the wellbeing of our city’s many residents, how challenges and opportunities facing our city might best be tackled to improve that wellbeing and how such questions might be informed by an emerging evidence base, from academia and also from those cities that take research and evidence-based policy seriously. We have drawn on cities that we think are top performers in answering such questions and believe that our musings thereon may be of value to some others interested in cities.

This book is one result. It is practical in focus, intended mainly for city planners and others who have city-wide roles and interests, as well as for those whose bailiwick is part thereof (e.g. a sub-region, local authority or neighbourhood). It should also be of value to students of urban planning, transport planning, geography, economics, social sciences, policy sciences and related disciplines.

Our particular concern is to help broaden the scope of long-term land use transport planning in cities, our research underlining the increasing inter-relatedness of much that happens in cities. Narrow, silo-based thinking, which has a long tradition in urban land use transport planning, has long passed its use-by-date and there are many exciting developments taking place in leading cities, in terms of incorporating a broader agenda into thinking about city futures and doing so in ways that recognise
inter-connections. Integrated land use transport planning is the result but it is still not widely practised and few cities lead across the board. We hope that there are some ideas in this book that will help even those planners in the best cities, places like London, Freiburg, Vancouver and Portland.

Writing the book has been interesting, informative and challenging. We come from different disciplines: economics/transport policy, social/environmental policy and geography/urban planning. Dealing with such a value-laden subject has required that we each learn from the others in seeking agreed positions on many matters and in finding ways of handling issues where we may disagree. There are no absolutes in public policy and what may be best in one setting may not be in another. This is the everyday stuff of city planning! Readers will have different challenges, opportunities, insights, perspectives and values from ours. Citizen wellbeing for all citizens and green values are high on our priority list, as is a productive city. This directly affects what interests us most in city planning and influences the solutions we tend to favour.

The critical importance of approaching land use transport planning in an integrated way to meet the needs of people and the environment is the key message of this book, where the matters encompassed in such an integrated approach are necessarily becoming increasingly broad. The subject matter poses serious challenges for practitioners, as it does for anyone seeking to write about the topic. We continually found ourselves wondering about where to place discussion of particular topics, given the high degree of interconnectedness among most of our material. This may mean that the reader occasionally finds some discussion turning up in unexpected places, demonstrating the difficulties and challenges in trying to think, plan and write in an integrated way.

We hope we have provided a sufficiently broad canvas for readers to consider what we say and how it might help deal with some of the challenges and opportunities they face. For students, we hope it encourages you to think broadly, not narrowly, and grab opportunities to contribute your own new knowledge to making cities better places for their citizens, now and in the future.

As a final introductory comment, we are continually impressed by the wisdom of the crowd and equally confused about why, given this wisdom, political leaders and their advisers are often so slow to move on many great ideas for making better cities. The more our cities are able to tap the vast talents of their citizens, the less need there will be for books like this!