Re-imagining Australia’s East Coast
Martine Letts FAIIA, CEO Committee for Melbourne

Tuesday 18 June, 2019: 6pm for 6.20pm – 7.30pm at Dyason House, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne

As integrated sets of cities and their surrounding suburban hinterlands, across which labour and capital can be reallocated at a very low cost, **megaregions** are now considered by many as the ‘central competitive unit’.

Transcending geographic and jurisdictional boundaries, megaregions are characterised by interlocking economic systems, common transportation systems, as well as shared natural resources. They are becoming increasingly prominent and placing an ever-increasing premium on a country's innovative capacity.

In a ground-breaking study by Richard Florida titled *The Rise of the Mega-Region*, the world’s top 40 megaregions make up only 18% of the global population but produce 66% of economic activity and 86% of patented innovation. They are hyper-competitive units, and in the decades to come many sectors of Australia’s economy will increasingly struggle to compete on the global stage if Australia cannot effectively leverage the benefits that megaregions bring.

What would effective collaboration and connectivity between cities and regions along Australia’s eastern seaboard mean? How can it enhance Australia’s engagement with the Indo-Pacific region? And how can Australia better compete in an increasingly interdependent, fast-changing world?

The ultimate vision resulting from greater collaboration along Australia’s east coast is the creation of an **Australian East Coast Megaregion**. It’s a big, ambitious idea, but one which could help navigate Australia through the twenty-first century with vigour and confidence.

In 2016 Martine Letts was recognised as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. At this Fellow’s Address she will be presented with her Fellow’s Award by Zara Kimpton OAM, AIIA National Vice President.

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**Martine Letts FAIIA** is the Chief Executive Officer of the Committee for Melbourne. Martine has extensive experience within the government, non-profit and international policy sectors, providing high-level expertise in public policy development, formulation and promotion both in Australia and internationally. Martine joined the Committee in March 2016 after serving as Chief Executive Officer of the Australia China Business Council (ACBC), where she led the development of the organisation’s national strategy. Prior to her role at the ACBC, Martine was Deputy Director of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, where she spearheaded the organisation’s business and organisational development. As Secretary-General of the Australian Red Cross (ARC) from 2001-2004, based at its national headquarters in Melbourne, she worked on a national transformation strategy to help the ARC improve its delivery of community and relief services across Australia and globally. Martine was a senior Australian diplomat for 17 years. She served as Australian Ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, Deputy Head of Mission and Australian Deputy Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and was an adviser to Foreign Minister Gareth Evans from 1992-1994. She served on the Australian National University Council from 2004-2014 and was a Councillor on the Council on Australia Latin America Relations (COALAR) for ten years. She is a member of the Australian Volunteers International board. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Political Science and German) from the ANU.

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