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Ian Williamson is Professor of Surveying and Land Information, Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructures and Land Administration, Department of Geomatics, at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

His teaching and research is concerned with cadastral, land and geographic information systems, land administration and spatial data infrastructures, in both developed and developing countries. In recent years he has focussed on the role that land administration systems play in supporting sustainable development, improving the efficiency of land administration systems, the inter-dependence of land administration systems and spatial data infrastructures, and understanding the operation of land markets. He has authored or co-authored over 400 publications on these topics.

He has undertaken research or consultancies worldwide, including for various country development assistance agencies, the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as for most governments in Australia. He is a Chartered Professional Engineer and Licensed Land Surveyor.

He is a Member of the Order of Australia (AM), a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering Australia (FTSE) and was awarded the Centenary Medal by the Prime Minister of Australia in 2003. He is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Fellow of the Institution of Surveyors Australia, a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Australia, an Honorary Fellow of The Mapping Sciences Institute, Australia and an Honorary Member of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG). He was Chairperson of FIG Commission 7 (Cadastral and Land Management) from 1994-98 and Director United Nations Liaison for the FIG from 1998 – 2002. He was a member of the Executive of the UN sponsored Permanent Committee for GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific and chaired its Working Group on Spatially Enabling Government (formerly Cadastral) (2002-2009).

At Melbourne he has been President of the Academic Board and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. He was Head, Department of Surveying and Land Information from 1986-1993 and Head, Department of Geomatics from 1998-2007. He was founding Director of the Centre for Spatial data Infrastructures and Land Administration from 2000-2007.

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**A Vision for Australia's Land Registries –  
Lessons for federal countries that have state land registries**

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**SUMMARY**

*“We in Australia run the risk, for want of appropriate commitment, leadership and perception of the real economics involved, of creating for ourselves a special Land Information Babel”*

Justice M.D. Kirby, 1982

Australia and her federated states have significantly improved land information management since the 1980s: cadastres were digitized, land registries computerized, GIS was incorporated and on-line systems developed, all within a spatial data infrastructure environment. However, the risk of a “special Land Information Babel” as espoused by Justice Kirby in 1982 still remains, particularly in the realm of land registries. Australia is now entering the era of national approaches to land registration. The proposed national eConveyancing system represents the first step. Many more initiatives will follow. Australia's land registries need to continue collaboration in order to build a coherent national vision based around key registries, spatial enablement, and shared services. The power inherent in all land registry information must be unleashed. Land registries are more than simply systems for conveyancing. They are multi-purpose tools with the capacity to service society with the information needed to respond to our most pressing challenges, increasingly with a national focus. The lessons from Australia as it moves to a national focus with its land registries will be of interest to all countries, especially those based on a federal system where land registries are a state or provincial responsibility.