

30 June 2016

Fishermans Bend Taskforce
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
GPO Box 500
East Melbourne Victoria 8002

Dear Sir/Madam

It is our pleasure to submit a response to *Fishermans Bend Recast Vision Draft* for consultation, May 2016.

We welcome the Taskforce's commitment to a comprehensive vision for the urban transformation of Fishermans Bend. In fact we believe that the Fishermans Bend development, done properly, represents a unique opportunity to develop a world's best practice urban transformation which will cement Melbourne's status as a leading world city and attract the highest quality Australian and international human capital.

The Committee for Melbourne (Committee) has long had a remit to enhance the future prospects of Melbourne. Founded 30 years ago, the Committee is an apolitical, not-for-profit member network that unites a cross-section of our city's leaders and organisations to work together to enhance Melbourne's economic, social and environmental future.

Our members represent around 120 organisations drawn from the city's major companies, academic institutions and civic organisations across a broad range of industries. We represent no single interest and seek to challenge conventional thinking and develop innovative policy that continues to enhance the 'World's Most Liveable City.'

As part of these endeavours, the Committee established a *Shaping Melbourne Taskforce* in 2010 that produced a [three-volume series](#) investigating Melbourne's challenges and opportunities as the city and its population continue to grow. The report series, *Melbourne Beyond 5 Million*¹ informed the Committee's subsequent advocacy efforts and many of its insights and recommendations are still relevant and instructive for Fishermans Bend urban redevelopment.

The Committee is encouraged by the Recast Vision approach to this green fields renewal opportunity to meet Victoria's longer term needs, such as (1) managing population growth, (2) securing high value jobs, and (3) providing sustainable and resilient employment and housing options within the CBD.

¹ Committee for Melbourne, *Melbourne Beyond 5 Million – Volume 3: Physical Infrastructure and Connectivity*, October 2010.

With an annual growth of almost 100,000 new residents each year across Greater Melbourne, a critical factor determining our city's liveability is our urban design and its accompanying residential development. The ability of Melbourne to successfully absorb and accommodate a growing population will for a large part determine whether we can maintain our status as one of the world's most liveable cities.

Melbourne's rapid growth places strong pressures on, traffic congestion, freight bottlenecks, declining housing affordability and the sprawling nature of recent urban development. Thus it is critical that infrastructure support, connectivity and a sense of place underpin this exciting urban development opportunity. Retaining the city's competitiveness and attractiveness on a national, and indeed global level, will be dependent on Melbourne's capacity to support a growing and changing workforce and to provide an attractive location for continued business investment.

Below is a list of the key observations that the Committee's membership base has made with regard to the *Fishermans Bend Recast Vision*:

Planning – room for innovation

The Committee believes that planning should be world-leading and innovative rather than just 'best practice'. For Melbourne to continue to market itself as world-leading city, we need to demonstrate that it is.

We endorse Minister Wynne's statement that, "... we have the chance to make it a benchmark for smart, sustainable development and high-density community living".²

Following on from our observations of emerging trends, it is encouraging to see that the *Recast Vision* recognizes that Fishermans Bend offers the opportunity to do something different.

It is expected that the development will occur progressively over many years. Development concepts and technology are therefore likely to change over that time. Approaches seen as difficult today, may become commonplace. Accordingly, the Committee encourages Fishermans Bend Taskforce to build in room for innovation that could include architects and technical designers to draw up models that go beyond current planning industry guidelines. Approaches deemed best practice today will not be considered as such in the future, and so it is critical that the approach be flexible.

The Committee feels that innovation and the importance of enablers for innovation to occur progressively over 40 years should be explored. For instance, class A third pipe and building rainwater tanks are mandatory under the July 2014 *Fishermans Bend Strategic Framework Plan*³ and are examples of enablers for future innovation. Another example mentioned is the construction of a local sewer mining plant and smart interconnected tanks at building scale.

² Minister's Foreword, *Fishermans Bend Recast Vision*, Draft for consultation, May 2016.

³ *Fishermans Bend Strategic Framework Plan*, 7. Water and energy management, July 2014.

Planning – controls and incentives

As noted in the *Recast Vision*, Fishermans Bend is planned to be Australia's largest urban renewal Green Star Community that aims to improve environmental efficiencies in our buildings, boost productivity, create jobs and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. Recognising that Fishermans Bend presents as a greenfield site with very little heritage overlay and without residents, it is a blank canvas that lends itself to becoming a globally marketable precinct focused on clever innovation.

What is not clear to the Committee is how planning controls will enforce a green infrastructure in the private realm. While the *Plan Melbourne refresh discussion paper*⁴ describes a range of strategies to green our buildings, it indicates that further work is needed to encourage implementation. The Committee suggests that incentives and non-traditional market mechanisms are explored to encourage developers to explore green infrastructure in the private realm.

Development staging

A key observation is that Fishermans Bend has large and small ownership of land parcels. While planning and minimum requirements are not specified in the *Recast Vision*, it is not clear if developers only need to focus on their piece of land or need to meet planning and minimum requirements that would cover the whole precinct.

The Committee believes that consideration is needed on how the development will be staged, given the large number of private land parcels. The development of these privately owned land parcels requires innovative thinking and articulation.

Because the varying size of land parcels allows for granularity, it is possible that buildings and infrastructure will evolve so precincts will not all look the same.

In recognizing that there could be potential development issues, we should look for ways to ensure that planning controls remove the possibility of hostile looking environments occurring and achieve a balance of carparks, high and low buildings and green spaces.

Importance of scale

The Committee believes that the *Recast Vision* needs to show consideration for the area at different scales—from the building level through to the precinct level and then through to the whole of development. Ideas can then be considered on all these scales and integrate through the scales.

The Committee notes that the Ecologically Sustainable Development guidelines pay only lip service to individual housing and office design and suggests that the Taskforce consider minimum standards and requirements to get better outcomes for intelligent design that considers the impacts of shading and shadowing. Critically there needs to be a balance of use of vertical space with open spaces and avenues for people to enjoy and access. It is highly recommended that collaboration occur between developers, for example, developers of low-rise schools and high-rise buildings, to explore urban design that meets the needs of individual and family configurations. We suggest that high-rise buildings should

⁴ Plan Melbourne refresh discussion paper, October 2015.

have a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom options and should include opportunities for rooftop gardens and balconies that can be used.

In addition, it is important that heights of buildings do not overpower the experience of walking around. More examples are needed to show designs of towers and podiums that are not overbearing. Due to current constraints on building development, the Committee reasons there is a risk that there may be little freedom to produce innovative and good design for housing options. At the same time there needs to be mandated housing development standards that allows for freedom.

The Committee notes that examples of effective high-rise apartments in other countries that are world's leading practice show how high-rise housing, car-parking and ground-floor amenities work for residents. Importantly, there is a need to hold out for more ground-floor diversity than currently exists in Melbourne's high-rise (more than just glass-plated fronts for supermarkets). Ideally, new development should follow the trend of a return to local shops with a balance between small and large retailers like butchers, bakers and vegetable markets that would enable residents to shop in their place of residence and on the way home from work.

The Committee also notes that the *Recast Vision* does not indicate what the overall balance of form and function for the precinct should be, such as the proportion of buildings dedicated to businesses versus those dedicated to housing.

Public transport

The Committee considers that public transport infrastructure is of critical importance both for future higher concentrations of residents and for employees getting into and out of the area. Connectivity and accessibility presents major challenges and there is a need for innovative, clever public transport options.

The Fishermans Bend Employment precinct has significant advantages in that it is at the doorstep of the city and can be accessed by three major roads. However due to absence of frequent and convenient public transport options, there is currently little incentive to use anything but cars. The *Recast Vision* indicates that it is '... expected that transport infrastructure will need to be invested in before, during and after residential and business construction'.

The following ideas and suggestions are put forward for consideration:

- The distance from Lorimer to the Employment precinct is far and currently there is limited access. It is also dangerous to walk on the overpass. The public transport connectivity into the Employment precinct needs to be significantly improved.
- We can learn from the huge success of the light rail in Brisbane that has been greeted with high acceptance and patronage and resulted in taking the pressure off other transport.
- The potential for smarter use of buses needs to be considered. Currently Melbourne buses are not favoured and not fully patronised; firstly, because buses often do not connect to critical points of destination and links to other public transport and secondly, because they are not regular enough. However the advantage of buses is that they are adaptable and therefore cost effective. Buses could be smaller;

more connected to key locations and public transport; more regular i.e. every 6 minutes; and promoted to make it 'cool' to travel on buses.

- Integration of bike infrastructure to public transport is critical to connect walking and cycling to buses, trams and trains. Often there is a problem of poor signage.
- The Yarra River presents an opportunity for residents and employees to get into and out of the area. Currently there are existing barriers that apply to river transport, for example, maximum speed of 5 knots. Options such as faster and frequent ferries could be an attractive travel alternative to reduce reliance on roads and public transport.

Managing and living with flooding

The areas situated along the Yarra River are flood prone and have poor soils. It is noted that the issues of scale for flooding are not yet addressed or articulated in the *Recast Vision*. Flooding will trap people in the area when it occurs if flood management is not addressed in planning and development. This can be effectively managed if flood mitigation and flood resilient infrastructure is introduced at the planning phase.

The Committee suggests sophisticated flood management approaches be explored such as stratifying the development across a number of levels including green roofs, podium forecourts, green corridors and roadways that work in unison to collect, store and transport storm-water across the site. Raised walkways above flood levels and good design can manage flooding including public transport that is designed to accommodate flooding.

Green vision

A key message from the Committee is that the Fishermans Bend precinct should be independent and sustainable to have minimal reliance of existing city infrastructures such as energy, water access, drainage and waste removal. These ideas are put forward for consideration and exploration:

- Urban design concepts which combine open space, drainage and green infrastructure along the green spines and corridors
- The role of urban form in the private realm, in particular, the likely creation of podiums to manage the mandatory height of above the climate change 1 in 100 year flood levels and sea level rise
- Maximising green infrastructure within the private realm inclusive of podium and building facades
- The role integrated water and energy management can play in supporting the green vision.
 - Water infrastructure is one example—bringing water to the area from outside is expensive. Water access requires innovation by both public and private spheres that involve a whole of water access upgrade.

It is suggested that some real world examples would provide a powerful demonstration of how a green vision can be implemented.

In conclusion

The Committee is encouraged by Fishermans Bend Taskforce efforts to date and the positive signal that the call for contributions sends to the public. Engaging the community in this important debate is of vital importance and the Committee for Melbourne will continue to be at the forefront of this discussion. We are eager to work with the Taskforce, government, as well as our community leaders, to safeguard our bright future.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Committee to expand on any of the points touched on in this submission.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martine Letts', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Martine Letts
Chief Executive Officer
Committee for Melbourne