



Melbourne, let's talk about the future
A New Metropolitan Planning Strategy

Committee for Melbourne pre-submission

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the Committee for Melbourne

The Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) is an apolitical not-for-profit, member network that unites a cross-section of Melbourne's leaders and organisations to work together to enhance Melbourne's economic, social and environmental future.

Our aim is to ensure Melbourne's challenges and opportunities are tackled and grasped in ways that keep our city vital, inclusive, progressive and sustainable for the long-term.

Our members represent the highest levels of over 150 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.

1.2 About this submission

The Committee views the development of a new Metropolitan Planning Strategy (MPS) for Melbourne as a vital tool in addressing our capital city's acute challenges and in realising the potential of our unique strengths. We strongly believe Melbourne can get better as it gets bigger and the implementation of the right Metropolitan Strategy will go a long way to ensure this.

We commend the initiative of the current State Government for creating this process and we welcome the work that has been done by the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) in their Discussion Paper 'Melbourne, let's talk about the future', and subsequent consultations to date.

As an organisation we have long been involved in conversations and initiatives relating to strategic city building. We are subsequently aware of the many issues a Metropolitan Strategy must explore in great depth, and our early consultations with members have highlighted this. As a result we feel there are some key themes that would benefit from being flagged early in the process.

The aim of this pre-submission is not to provide an answer to all the themes outlined. Rather, the intention is to highlight key observations which have been expressed by the membership to date, including improved process, gaps in thinking or alternate ideas. This will be followed by a more comprehensive response in March 2013.

2. Vision

The Committee supports the intention stated within the MPS to set a Vision for Melbourne to the year 2050. This is a critical component of the MPS. The Vision encapsulates Melbourne's aspirations for the future of its city, be that to be 'livable,' or 'sustainable,' an efficient city of outstanding global quality, or any other aspirations. It defines Melbourne's role in Australia, the Asian region and the world.

There is a growing collection of city indices, benchmarks, and other comparators, and growing interest in measuring city success across the globe. This work suggests that a strong and enduring Vision is a prerequisite to being a world leading city.

If the Vision for Melbourne is to be achieved, it will need to be clear enough to drive an agenda of action that defines the key commitments and broad development pathways that will need to be pursued over the next 40 years.

In our view, the Vision must be a strong and succinct statement that evokes a compelling and easily understood connection with the 'desired end state' that the Melbourne community will collectively strive for over the next four decades. The Vision should be distilled into a concise, crisp statement or key idea that can be grasped by all. It must be simple and digestible if it is going to be owned and embraced by the broader populace.

In addition to being collectively endorsed by the Melbourne Community, in order for the MPS to provide clear detail for the city's Vision and to be able to spell out the aspirations for the character and quality of Melbourne in 2050, the Committee believes the Vision Statement should also be highly distinctive to Melbourne. The Vision should be founded on the strengths that make Melbourne what it is today, but build on those foundations to aspire to achieve an ideal that is unique to Melbourne and sets our city apart from its national and regional competitors.

The MPS is the appropriate document for the Melbourne 'brand' to be enunciated because it deals with many of the levers that influence the growth and development, shape and appearance of the metropolis, and the experiences that will be available to future Melburnians.

2.1 Themes for Melbourne's Vision

The Committee believes the Vision should be supported by a limited number of key themes:

- well-connected communities;
- diversity and cultural excellence;
- economic prosperity;
- ecological sustainability;
- creativity, innovation and technology;
- internationally competitive; and,
- leadership.

We believe if the MPS vision is anchored by these themes, and with a strong implementation strategy and supporting governance, we can protect and enhance the qualities of Melbourne that will make it even better as it grows.

2.2 Measuring Melbourne's progress

If Melbourne is to achieve the Vision it sets for itself by 2050, then monitoring its attainment must be measured along the way, allowing for checks and balances to be made, and different strategies and actions to be put in place where existing ones are failing to take the city in the desired direction. This requires the objectives and actions put in place to be quantifiable or measurable.

The Committee believes Vision benchmarks should be derived to reflect key dimensions of Melbourne's qualities and distinctiveness, to provide tangible measures of achievement against the overall Vision and allow for comparability with other cities. These benchmarks set standards which will be the required platform for Melbourne's ongoing attractiveness and distinctiveness as a leading city in the region.

The benchmarks selected should be realistic and achievable. If not able to be expressed as quantifiable, measurable or absolute outcomes, then we encourage effort to be made to find proxy indicators of complex social, economic and environmental, transport and cultural phenomena which will allow key city issues to be monitored and the shaping of the city's progress towards its Vision.

2.3 Creating a shared Vision

In order for the MPS to deliver on the Vision for Melbourne, it must have a longevity, credibility and level of popular support that can endure changes in the electoral cycle. A concise, compelling, inclusive and highly accessible Vision statement will stand the greatest chance of bridging the gap between the 'Two Melbournes' identified in the Discussion Paper.

The Committee can offer a vehicle through which the MPS can be socialised, and a forum that can bring the community together to achieve the community buy-in that is critical to its ultimate success. We discuss the role the Committee would be prepared to play in facilitating the engagement process in the Section 5 'Communication and Engagement'.

3. Drivers

3.1 Key drivers influencing future Melbourne

The nine principles proposed within the Discussion Paper to inform the MPS are each important matters affecting the future growth of Melbourne. It appears however, there are potentially significant gaps in our knowledge of the particular influence these and other future drivers will have on Melbourne's growth to 2050. It is difficult to plan for the future without a view on the impact of future trends.

Whilst it is difficult to predict the future it is nonetheless important that the MPS is strongly informed by an understanding of future possibilities. The Discussion Paper recognises many trends influencing the city including changes in industry sector employment, the increasing demand for health services and the importance of tourism etc. However, there is no apparent analysis or connection between these trends and the future possibilities for metropolitan Melbourne.

3.2 Drivers of strategic importance

1. **Employment** - elevating employment in the MPS is the key city-shaping driver, but what type of economy are we planning for? How can the MPS facilitate the future economy which has a strong export/tradable sector focus? How does the MPS enable a concerted implementation program to achieve an accessible distribution of employment opportunities across the metropolis?
2. **Education** – the Discussion Paper rightly recognises and places education at the centre of Melbourne's (and Victoria's) efforts to succeed in the knowledge economy. The MPS needs to articulate the spatial policies that will enable this to occur. Is it enhancing our secondary school precincts, better linking employment to higher education (utilising exemplars from the US and elsewhere) or harnessing technology to equitably distribute access to education across the metropolis?

3. **Health** – how the MPS will respond to healthcare as a natural economic engine (created by our aging population, desirous of more medical services), understanding these natural forces driving its growth and encouraging and channelling these toward productive technological improvement and building the healthcare sector. The private healthcare sector (which is becoming an increasingly important contributor to the State’s health system) is significantly constrained by the current planning arrangements.
4. **Tourism** - previous strategies have been silent on this matter. Tourism is a significant part of Victoria’s tradable sector yet the tourism sector often finds it very difficult to bring new concepts to market given the rigidities of the planning system. The MPS should enable new tourism opportunities in the metropolis to create a city that is appealing and accessible to non-residents as well as those who live in Melbourne.
5. **Alternative transport systems** - the future transport needs of the metropolis will not be met by traditional measures alone. The MPS can provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the balance of transport options and introduce a **priority** for alternative and active transport systems such as walking and cycling.
6. **Future technology** – the pace and impact of technological change continues to accelerate. How can the MPS recognise and integrate the potential for technological advancement to positively influence city shaping decision-making? For example will our patterns of work significantly change or will the need to co-locate to take advantage of agglomeration economics continue?

4. Governance and Implementation

The Committee acknowledges the principles outlined in Section 5 of the Discussion Paper: ‘Making it Happen’. The principles of infrastructure investment, leadership and partnerships will be critical to successful implementation. The Discussion Paper’s ideas for partnerships, agreements, good governance and performance measurement are worthy of discussion. We also believe, however, that several additional items need to be explored:

- Current deficiencies in the metropolitan planning system
- How to establish integrated decision making across State Government agencies
- Looking to other cities for examples of governance success

4.1 Present state of the Metropolitan planning system

The Committee believes a discussion about metropolitan Melbourne’s future should include observations about the successes and failures of the existing system, to provide a baseline position from which to recommend the changes needed to “make it happen”.

A report produced by the Committee’s Shaping Melbourne Taskforce, *Melbourne Beyond 5 Million, Volume One, Governance and the Melbourne Proposition (2010)*, included some observations. We seek to expand on these further.

4.2 How to establish integrated decision making across State Government agencies

The Committee acknowledges the Discussion Paper identifies the need for better mechanisms for inter-council and inter-agency cooperation. We believe this is a critical issue which needs priority attention. While partnerships and agreements help build relationships, there is a more fundamental question regarding governance structure. The Discussion Paper gives equal weight to this item, along with a range of more localised and issue-specific matters, such as municipal boundaries, transformative projects, public land management and sharing data and research.

Our observation is that there is a lack of a formalised governance structure to create a unified, coordinated approach to decision-making, and a consistency to the annual budget allocations and capitals works programs of separate agencies, insofar as these impact on metropolitan strategy. This is a significant barrier to influencing metropolitan patterns of investment and land use.

4.3 Looking to other cities for examples of governance success

The Committee understands the challenges faced by Melbourne in relation to governance, but believes we are not alone in these issues. Melbourne has measured itself against other cities for some time now, particularly in relation to liveability, but perhaps it's time to collaborate with other cities and to learn from others. We encourage more active research and discussion about other options and learnings from both interstate and internationally.

For example, the Western Australian planning system includes a Planning Commission, supported by committees responsible for infrastructure coordination, sustainable transport, coastal planning and regional planning. These comprise independent members who make decisions and advise elected decision-makers within a framework of delegated authority and strategic call-in. The support committees contain representatives from all relevant State agencies, to ensure regular and active dialogue and agency coordination.

5. Communication and Engagement

5.1 Process and role of the strategy

The Committee acknowledges the Discussion Paper's stated reasons why a strategy is needed, as contained in Section 2 'Vision'. We agree that keeping Melbourne liveable and competitive, moving beyond business as usual, meeting growth needs, integrating transport and land use, being innovative and unlocking capacity are worthy reasons.

We believe, however, that the ongoing discussion should include the intended role of the strategy and the process for preparing the strategy. There are alternate approaches to metropolitan strategy-making and options for how the strategy could be used by government. We recommend these be canvassed and discussed.

It appears there is a contradiction in positioning from the Minister's Message and the Forward from the Chair. For example, is the strategy confined to shaping changes to the built environment only, or will it seek to shape economic and community development outcomes for metropolitan Melbourne, which may not be directly relevant to land use or infrastructure.

5.2 Approach to communication and engagement

The Committee acknowledges the principle of leadership and partnership, as outlined in Section 4 'Making it Happen', is critical for successful implementation. It will be necessary to at least achieve a level of acceptance of the strategy in particular quarters necessary to implement its intentions. Achieving a high level of community approval for the strategy will also go a long way to ensure its long term success.

We believe, however, that these ideas are not sufficiently clear in the Discussion Paper, and that the community element of such partnerships is not sufficiently explored. Community level thinking will drive local and regional demand behaviours relating to housing, transport and business choices, and influencing this will be a key part of successful implementation. Similarly, we can learn from local community thinking and this would inform strategy development.

With this in mind, there is no stated philosophy and approach to communication or engagement. We would be interested to canvas the options available, particularly in relation to the participative engagement processes we understand will be used to develop the strategy document in 2013.

One example of a useful tool in a series of engagement activities is the recent work on the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, which included a random selection approach to seeking input from the community.

In closing we would like to commend the work that has been completed to date by the MAC and we look forward to working along side you to help shape Melbourne's future.