



Submission to the

**URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY REVIEW:
REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

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Introduction

The Committee for Melbourne would like to congratulate the Victorian Government on its *Report for Public Consultation: Urban Growth Boundary Review*.

The Committee is dedicated to preserving Melbourne's economic, cultural and social prosperity and liveability.

In May 2009, the Committee launched its new Taskforce, *Shaping Melbourne*, which is considering how we would like to live and work in the future, given our fast growing population and the impact of this on our city.

Within the Victorian Government's policy framework, *Melbourne @ 5 million* and the *Victorian Transport Plan*, the Taskforce is developing policy and action recommendations to address Melbourne's rapidly growing population and the pressure this places on our city's resources, infrastructure, industry, community and other needs.

Urban Growth Boundary Review

The Committee understands the current review to include:

1. Expansion of Melbourne's **Urban Growth Boundary** to meet the needs of Melbourne's growing population with new growth areas being recommended in Melbourne's west (between Melton, Caroline Springs and Werribee); north (from Epping North and Craigieburn to Beveridge and around Sunbury); and south-east (south-east of Cranbourne including Clyde).
2. A 50 kilometre twin-track **Regional Rail Link** proposed to run from west of Werribee to Southern Cross Station via Tarneit and Sunshine, separating regional and metropolitan train services.
3. A corridor is to be set aside for an **Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor** to create a major arterial transport link between Melbourne's west and north. The proposed route for the Transport Corridor includes road and rail links between the Werribee, Melton, Tullamarine and Craigieburn/Mickleham areas, a road link from the Metropolitan Ring Road in Thomastown to the Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor at the Hume Freeway, and a road link between the Deer Park Bypass and the Outer Metropolitan Ring.
4. A **Strategic Impact Assessment of Biodiversity** has been undertaken and recommends that two major grasslands reserves be created in Melbourne's west to protect endangered ecological communities and preserve green wedges for future generations.

Comments on the Key Areas of the Review

1. Expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary

The Committee recognises the need to accommodate new growth areas for future Melbourne, however at the same time we urge the Government to consider greater emphasis on policies to increase density within existing areas as a preference over further expanding the city's boundaries.

As Melbourne's population expands, the Government and the community need to develop creative ways to accommodate people close to where they will work, shop, study and enjoy recreational activities. Housing needs to be affordable, but so do living costs, and this can only be achieved along with a high quality sustainable lifestyle if transport is readily accessible and travel times are kept to a minimum.

The Committee therefore calls for an overarching urban planning policy for Melbourne of increasing density along arterial transport routes as a matter of right with height limits sensitive to neighbourhood planning and with appropriate protections to preserve the character and liveability of existing suburban communities encased within the arterial boundaries.

The Committee also calls for a final urban boundary to be established to provide long term clarity as to the final limits of Melbourne with future growth beyond this to be achieved through increasing density in existing areas or the further development of regional satellite centres.

2. A 50 kilometre twin-track Regional Rail Link

The Committee supports the further development of regional rail links. Consistent with our policy of limiting further boundary expansion and increasing densification in existing areas, future pressure on the urban fringe should be re-directed towards further development of the regional centres of Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland centres, connected to Melbourne through improved transport links and connections.

3. An Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor

The Committee supports planning and preservation of land for a major road and rail arterial transport link between Melbourne's west and north to accommodate future growth. Economic prosperity and liveability of our city is closely intertwined with ease of movement for commercial and private travel.

In December last year, the Committee welcomed the Victorian Transport Plan, however a link joining EastLink to the Tullamarine Freeway is also needed to improve freight efficiency and relieve congestion at the end of EastLink by removing through traffic.

4. A Strategic Impact Assessment of Biodiversity

Melbourne's reputation for liveability is in part related to its public spaces and green areas. Importantly, existing parklands in suburban areas and the 12 identified green wedges surrounding Melbourne must be preserved and enhanced despite the pressure of population growth.

The Government is to be applauded for its consideration of the impact of expanding growth areas on sensitive ecosystems and its efforts to provide offsets to protect and preserve our environmental heritage.

Comments on the Review's Objectives

The Committee for Melbourne supports the following objectives identified in the *Urban Growth Boundary Review*:

1. Ensure Melbourne's growth occurs in a sustainable way by addressing the future settlement, employment and transport needs of Melbourne, having regard to the directions and policies of Melbourne 2030, Melbourne @ 5 million, the Victorian Transport Plan and Freight Futures.

It is a necessity to accommodate urban growth and changing demographics. In providing over 600,000 new dwellings in the near future, a major re-think is needed of how we live.

The Committee supports Melbourne's future evolution to a polycentric city as proposed in Melbourne @ 5 million and improvements to the city's transport links projected in the Victorian Transport Plan. The Central Activities Districts play a vital role in alleviating systemic strains faced by our radial layout, however many questions remain as to how these centres can be made to work, what infrastructure will be needed and how will a range of commercial activities be attracted to them.

The Committee's Climate Change Report, *Future Map: Melbourne 2030 (2008)*, calls for urban resilience to adapt to our environment positively. It is essential that Melbourne's growth is managed sustainably through a range of initiatives including low emission energy technology, optimising energy performance of buildings (existing and new), water management and conservation, transport strategies, urban resilience (reducing vulnerability to heat and flood), procurement and consideration of social equity issues in relation to sustainability.

2. Define an Urban Growth Boundary to manage the growth of Melbourne's metropolitan urban area.

The Committee calls for the establishment of a final boundary to be established for Melbourne with any further growth beyond this boundary to be managed through increasing density within the boundary or the further development of regional satellite centres.

3. Define alignments for the Regional Rail Link (west of Werribee to Deer Park) and the Outer Metropolitan Ring /E6 Transport Corridor.

The Committee supports the planning and preservation of land for the purpose of establishing a future regional rail link and outer metropolitan ring/transport corridor.

4. Inform the planning of other long term transport infrastructure projects required to support future growth in population and the way goods are moved across the metropolitan area.

It is essential for the future economic prosperity of our city that this planning occurs. The Council of Australian Governments estimated in 2005 that congestion costs in Melbourne amounted to \$3 billion and that by 2020 these costs could double.

5. Identify opportunities for improving environmental outcomes within Melbourne's growth areas and protecting the values of adjoining green wedges including designating permanent grassland reserves in Melbourne's west.

The protection of green wedges, habitats and ecosystems for future generations is critical to the long term liveability of Melbourne.

To improve environmental outcomes in Melbourne's growth areas, our urban sprawl should be minimised. Densification along transport corridors is a viable alternative.

6. Provide certainty to local communities, developers and other investors about future development in the growth areas.

Community engagement with policy for future Melbourne is diluted as discussions occur largely in a polarised way between planners, investors, developers and residents.

To promote certainty, an overarching policy for the future development of Melbourne, including densification of existing areas along transport corridors as well as the development of new growth areas within a final defined boundary, is needed as a matter of urgency.

Shaping Melbourne Taskforce

The Committee for Melbourne's *Shaping Melbourne* Taskforce commenced in May 2009 to consider how we would like to live and work in the future given our rapidly growing population, within the context of the State Government's Melbourne @ 5 Million Report and the Victorian Transport Plan.

The Taskforce has developed into four key working groups. These are:

1. Melbourne @ 10 million – the future vision for our city.

Urban growth cannot continue to sprawl, as Melbourne's urban boundaries are limited by natural landscape and trunk service infrastructure. Land policy to increase medium density will better support the polycentric city model.

This group is looking at the longer term view of Melbourne's development. We are considering how the overall perspectives of planning and governance will foster healthy communities and future liveability in times of social and economic change.

The group will also have a strong economic focus. Our quest for affordable housing has overlooked affordable living. The implementation practices of urban growth should take into account economic redistribution and reinvention.

The economics of distributed infrastructure shape urban growth and people's lifestyle choices. We are investigating the role of policy in providing incentives for business investment into polycentric development.

2. Built Form Solutions and Placemaking

This group is considering the essential character of Melbourne's liveability and how to preserve, enhance or duplicate what is most valued by our citizens in existing urban environments.

By building around existing economic and social infrastructure, we leverage existing facilities without the need to generate urban sprawl. Housing density and diversity should be sustainable yet affordable.

We are exploring how our carbon footprint can be minimised through future construction methods and building design. The provision of multi-faceted facilities for multi-use can inject culture and character into Central Activities Districts.

3. Infrastructure

The polycentric way of living and working is fundamentally different to how Melbourne has been sprawling to live and converging to work. Urban growth has been shaped by design of trunk services.

The impact of infrastructure on local economies influences urban sprawl. This group is considering how public transport, recycled resources and technology development could support central activities districts and densification.

4. Community Engagement

It is clear that the current process for development to occur in Melbourne alienates the community. This group is examining ways to germinate a positive communal voice which will assist relationship building between all stakeholders.

Planning governance needs to be reviewed to identify what model will promote local considerations and expeditious decision making to construct central activities districts and increase urban density successfully.

Conclusion

Over the next six months, the Committee for Melbourne's *Shaping Melbourne* Taskforce is looking at where it can best add value to Melbourne's social and economic development.

We are committed to ensuring a positive future and recognise that densification is intrinsic to urban growth. We have an opportunity to rethink the ways we have traditionally lived and worked in Victoria and create a future that is both liveable and economically prosperous for us and the generations to come.

The Committee for Melbourne thanks the Victorian Government for this opportunity to respond to its future planning.