

Short-term options for Melbourne Airport Rail Link risk compromising Victoria's West

The most immediate and important issues facing Victoria are the long-term investment decisions for the development of our transport infrastructure. These are difficult decisions, also because they are practically irreversible in any reasonable timeframe, and will impact on the liveability and experiences of the community and visitors for decades to come.

The Committee for Melbourne's members have identified the Melbourne Airport Rail Link as the most important issue facing our state because it is a crucial building block for city, regional, interstate and global connectivity. We are not alone. Fellow Committees in Melbourne's West and in the regions have also been vocal about the need for a modern airport link solution that delivers critical capacity and connectivity for our city and our state.

Greater Melbourne is one of the fastest growing cities in the developed world. However, this growth is not uniform. Melbourne's western suburbs, such as Melton, Sunbury and Wyndham, are some of the fastest growing suburbs in Australia. Those suburbs lack sufficient transport connectivity and capacity today, let alone what is needed to service the forecast future population boom of up to 112% in those areas. [see table below]

The Australian Federal Government has committed \$5 billion to build the Airport Rail Link and the State Government has agreed it will match this commitment. All of us as taxpayers, and particularly in Melbourne's west, have a right to expect that such a significant amount of money will be spent with the future in mind, and not be subject to short term political pressures and compromises.

Taxpayers should be very concerned at proposals for an Airport Rail Link that would reduce capacity on our already congested suburban or regional rail lines and potentially create a city of 'haves and have-nots'. Why? Other cities around the world have found that social, cultural and economic isolation leads to community dislocation and social unrest for residents of affected suburbs who don't have access to the same services and opportunities as the rest of the city.

Proposals like using the existing MM1 route, do not add capacity to the rail network and therefore risk further exacerbating the congestion issues that people in the west are already facing.

For Victoria to remain internationally competitive as a leading tourism and business destination, we must have a fast, direct and dedicated airport train.

The Committee considers that any airport rail link must offer:

- A regular, rapid express service of no more than 20 minutes between the airport and the city, with Sunshine as the only stop on that route
- Dedicated rail lines with dedicated rolling stock to accommodate baggage
- A solution that will add to overall rail capacity to service the rapid population growth in the north and west of the city
- The building blocks for regional rail services to Victoria's largest regional centers like Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, by enabling the next generation high-speed trains

This is a crucial issue which goes to the heart of decision-making by our Governments and the investment of taxpayer dollars. When it comes to city-shaping investments of such importance, Australians should be demanding that major infrastructure projects, like the Airport Rail Link, should deliver productivity and liveability improvements for all Victorians.

Signed

Scott Tanner

Chair, Committee for Melbourne

The Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) works towards *shaping a better future for Greater Melbourne*. Representing more than 140 members from a broad cross section of corporate, academic, not-for-profit and government sectors, the Committee's members work together to ensure that Greater Melbourne remains a great place to live, work and enjoy the many attractions that our great state and city have to offer.

Key Statistics

Key Local Government Area	Population 2018	Population 2036	% growth
Geelong	252,220	360,250	43%
Ballarat	107,330	145,930	36%
Bendigo	116,050	153,760	32%
Wyndham	255,320	459,200	80%
Greater Shepparton	66,010	77,690	18%
Melton	156,710	332,050	112%
Inner Metropolitan Melbourne	381,680	588,530	54%
Sub-Total Local Govt Areas	1,335,320	2,117,410	58%

Source: *Victoria in Future 2019*

Yours sincerely,



Scott Tanner

Chair, Committee for Melbourne