

14 August 2020

Mr Mark Curry  
Independent Reviewer

### **Submission: Independent review of the Victorian Ports System**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Transport's independent review of the Victorian Ports System (discussion paper).

Victorian ports are critically important to the prosperity and liveability of Victoria. Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) welcomes the review into the operation of these key assets to ensure they are equipped to meet current and future trade demands.

The Committee is an apolitical, not-for-profit, member-based organisation that brings together over 140 organisations from Greater Melbourne's business, academic and civic sectors whose common purpose is to shape a better future for Melbourne.

As an independent organisation, the Committee represents no single interest group or political position but seeks to challenge conventional thinking and to develop innovative ideas to continue to enhance Melbourne's position as an economically prosperous and highly liveable global city.

The Committee has an established Transport Taskforce, which is made up of individuals from our membership base. Its aim is to foster a greater understanding of Melbourne's transport challenges, identify key priorities for action and advocate for change.

The Committee's Transport Taskforce recently released a report titled *Transporting Melbourne: A call for an Integrated Transport Plan for Greater Melbourne*. It calls on the Victorian Government to develop and publish a comprehensive plan for an integrated transport system for Greater Melbourne, which incorporates transport, land-use and economic development planning.

Some of the ideas within *Transporting Melbourne* relate to the discussion paper, particularly Chapter 8, which asks:

1. Do you think the current planning system in Victoria and associated port-related tools provide sufficient protection for ports from encroachment by adjacent land uses?
2. If not, what are the main weaknesses in the system and what would you change?

*Transporting Melbourne* emphasises the need for integrated planning to be strategically focussed, which would signal to the community and investors the direction that the city is headed. We must have a picture of how Melbourne will grow, with its core assets, including Port of Melbourne (the Port), forming the basis of a larger vision.

*Transporting Melbourne* notes the importance of having an efficient, sustainable and cost-effective freight and logistics industry and that the long-term design and execution of an integrated plan for Melbourne, must service the city's growing freight task. While the Committee's focus is on Greater Melbourne, this concept is relevant for Victoria's regions, especially where other commercial ports are located.

With the Port considered "by far the largest and most significant asset in the Victorian port system" and anticipated to handle triple the volume of goods by mid-century, more than ever, the implementation of a clear plan for the development of the Port and strategic planning for the supply chain is needed. This will help the Port achieve its economic potential – important for all Victorians.

Greater integration regarding the Port, its surrounds and the broader supply chain will allow the Port of Melbourne to implement its development strategy and give its stakeholders confidence for future investment. This would include information relating to the timing of infrastructure delivery, which would help attract new investment in and around the Port.

To ensure Melbourne maintains its position as the country's largest logistics centre, and for Victoria to thrive economically, the Committee encourages greater consideration for the future vision and planning of all ports and supply chains.

By highlighting issues relating to the Port of Melbourne, we believe this could guide consideration of current or future challenges relevant to all Victorian commercial ports. The issues worth consideration include:

- Ensuring adequate buffers exist to minimise land-use conflict.
- Improving infrastructure management through an integrated transport plan.
- Ensuring that development of Fishermans Bend balances urban development with the growing freight task.

### **Buffers**

A major challenge facing the Port is the effect various planning decisions have had on the operation of its freight infrastructure and the corresponding impact this has had on the efficiency of the supply chain.

An efficient supply chain needs to be able to operate throughout the day and into the night to ensure freight movement is efficient and operators can benefit from minimal traffic during off-peak periods. Unfortunately, over the last decade, urban growth and development has placed increasing pressure on the operations of the Port which may have reduced its ability to operate at full potential.

Greater physical separation of the Port and urban development should be considered to minimise land-use conflict. The implementation of buffers such as landscaping, open space or low-intensity land uses could help reduce the impact of noise, air emissions, vibration and lighting from port activities.

### **Infrastructure**

As *Transporting Melbourne* highlights, an integrated transport plan can ensure that freight operators have appropriate access to Victoria's road and rail networks, whilst accommodating urban growth and economic development.

Peak-hour traffic congestion and demand on Melbourne's road network has worsened over time. While COVID-19 will likely alter the working and travel habits for many individuals, congestion and overcrowding on Melbourne's roads is expected to return in the post-pandemic period.

As Melbourne's population grows and as freight volumes handled by the Port increase over the coming decades, the demand placed on the city's road and rail network will grow. The Committee encourages the development of an integrated transport plan that would ensure the efficiency of the city's road and rail network now and into the future.

Many of the options to achieve these outcomes are considered in *Transporting Melbourne*. Incentives that encourage individuals to use public transport, particularly during off-peak periods, might encourage a shift in behaviour towards off-peak travel. Furthermore, more targeted demand management options

could reduce congestion on the roads, including on-demand bus services, varied pricing of parking spaces based on times and locations, as well as the implementation of road-user charging mechanisms.

Part of the solution will involve rail. Earlier this year, the Victorian Government approved the \$125 million Port Rail Transformation Project – a welcome initiative that will ensure more containers are transported in and out of the Port via rail. Additional rail infrastructure may need to be delivered in a timely manner to ensure growing freight volumes can be accommodated.

## **Fishermans Bend**

The Committee recognises the potential of Fishermans Bend. As Australia's largest urban renewal precinct on the edge of Melbourne's CBD, and adjacent to the Port, the precinct's development will play a key role in supporting Melbourne's growth.

With up to 80,000 residents to call Fishermans Bend home over the next 30 years, along with 80,000 new jobs, the area will see substantial redevelopment. This influx of people will also cause an increase in local commuter traffic and levels of mixed land use.

As Fishermans Bend undergoes its renewal, it is important that the Victorian Government and key stakeholders consider the needs of the Port and the wider freight and logistics operators that rely on its efficiency and accessibility.

The Fishermans Bend Framework, designed to guide investment and development, addresses the need to protect the operations and connections to the Port, including safeguarding 24/7 access by preserving a direct rail and road freight corridor. However, implementing the Framework will be critical. If these protections become inadequate over time, it will likely have negative impacts for the Port, the businesses it serves as well as the surrounding communities.

As highlighted in *Transporting Melbourne*, a publicly available integrated transport plan would provide direction on how Melbourne will grow, including Fishermans Bend. This vision would ensure investment and economic certainty, and would help meet the community's liveability and freight needs.

Attached is a copy of *Transporting Melbourne*, which we encourage you to read to help guide your thinking.

The Committee thanks the Department of Transport for providing the opportunity to provide feedback on the Victorian Ports System discussion paper.

Yours sincerely,



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CEO