

16 September 2020

The Committee Manager
Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee

Submission: Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations.

Committee for Melbourne (the Committee) welcomes the inquiry into current and future arrangements to secure environmental infrastructure for a growing population. Environmental infrastructure is essential for healthy and liveable communities. It allows residents to enjoy recreation space and greenery, reduces pollution and noise, and encourages physical activity.

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.

Earlier this year, the Committee's Transport Taskforce released the report *Transporting Melbourne: A call for an Integrated Transport Plan for 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.

The essence of this report could guide consideration for arrangements that ensure adequate environmental infrastructure is available for a growing population. Key issues worth exploration include the need for:

- Strategic focus
- Collaboration
- Neighbourhood development

Strategic focus

Transporting Melbourne emphasises the need for integrated planning to be strategically focussed, which would signal to policymakers, the community and investors the direction that the city is headed.

With Melbourne's population expected to grow to approximately nine million people by mid-century, significant pressure will be placed on the city's built and natural environments. Such intensive urban growth could lead to crowded parks and open spaces, as well as a shortage of sporting fields for clubs experiencing strong participatory demand. Additional consequences would include rising carbon emissions and pollution.

Access to environmental infrastructure will become more important as Melbourne's population grows. However, the absence of a comprehensive, integrated plan for Melbourne could inhibit the capacity for all Melburnians to benefit from environmental infrastructure.

If Melbourne is to further advance identified metropolitan and regional growth precincts, there must be widespread understanding of which precincts will be developed, how they will be developed and the timing of their development. Such a plan would outline where the population might be distributed at various stages out to 2050.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive plan, which considers these issues and is strategically focussed, will help ensure that all current and future Melburnians have access to, and use of, adequate environmental infrastructure.

Collaboration

Transporting Melbourne emphasises the need for an optimised governance model that encourages strategic decision-making and allows for the implementation of an integrated transport plan, which has targets, timeframes and accountabilities.

The Federal and Victorian Governments, along with 31 metropolitan councils, all have a stake in determining how Melbourne grows. These governments, including the various governmental bodies and agencies, must find ways to collaborate and plan for issues which transcend organisational remits and municipal boundaries.

The Committee recognises that there are differences in the availability of environmental infrastructure between different suburbs and metropolitan precincts. In some instances, certain infrastructure development may require cooperation between governments. For example, bike paths will most likely cross local council boundaries and perhaps pass through local, state, and/or federal government-owned land. Ensuring that there is adequate environmental infrastructure for all Melburnians – now and in the future – requires inter-governmental collaboration and well-considered land-use planning.

Neighbourhood development

Transporting Melbourne was written prior to the onset of COVID-19, yet its key message remains as relevant as ever. The impact of the pandemic does not reduce the need for a comprehensive, integrated blueprint for Melbourne, but may well change the sequencing and implementation of key components.

The need for social distancing and the implementation of lockdown measures have seen more people working from home and confined within the parameters of their local neighbourhoods. Such circumstances have increased demand for local green spaces and other forms of environmental infrastructure.

Active transport and increased demand for more liveable neighbourhoods may be a legacy of this period. To cultivate more liveable neighbourhoods, planners and policymakers will need to improve access to, and use of, environmental infrastructure for all Melburnians.

As Melbourne recovers from the COVID-19 crisis and the population continues to grow over the coming decades, the demand placed on the city's environmental infrastructure will grow. The Committee encourages the development of an integrated plan that would ensure there is enough environmental infrastructure to meet community needs and expectations now and into the future.

Attached is a copy of *Transporting Melbourne*, which calls for an integrated transport plan for Greater Melbourne and highlights specific issues relevant to this Inquiry.

The Committee thanks the Victorian Legislative Assembly's Environment and Planning Committee for providing the opportunity to contribute to its Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Martine Letts
CEO