



# COMMITTEE FOR GEELONG

PLAN MELBOURNE

SUBMISSION

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## **1. Introduction**

The Committee for Geelong (CfG) is pleased to lodge a submission to Plan Melbourne, the Metropolitan Planning Strategy.

The CfG is an independent group of member organisations, working together to leverage the economic potential of the Geelong region. The CfG works to achieve the best long-term outcomes for the region, enabling Geelong to become a world-class city. The CfG make connections and creates opportunities to help deliver positive social outcomes and develop a vital, inclusive, progressive, smart and sustainable Geelong region for the future. CfG members include business, education, health, local government, non-government and community organisations. Over the past ten years, the CfG has influenced significant economic and social outcomes in the region.

The CfG welcomes Plan Melbourne, a vision for Melbourne's growth to 2050, which will have a substantial impact on the future development of the Geelong region. The CfG is pleased that key infrastructure (such as the Port of Geelong and Avalon Airport) and regional projects (such as Vision 2) are referenced in the Strategy. However, the CfG recommends that Geelong, and some of its key projects, are further emphasised in Plan Melbourne.

As Melbourne continues to grow, and as identified in Plan Melbourne, the rebalancing of metropolitan and regional areas is crucial. Plan Melbourne therefore needs to incorporate specific policies to secure Geelong's position for the future.

## **2. Background**

Geelong is Victoria's second largest city with a population of approximately 220,000 people. The regional economy is diverse – health, education and service sectors are now the key employers, however manufacturing is still important.

The CfG believes that Geelong should be recognised as Victoria's 'second city'. Its infrastructure (the Port of Geelong, Avalon Airport, its road and rail connections), world class health and education services, employment and lifestyle opportunities are attracting many new residents and businesses to Geelong. Plan Melbourne is an opportunity to reinforce Geelong's strategic 'second city' policy position.

It is evident in Plan Melbourne that regional Victoria is part of the solution, however the CfG believes that the role of Geelong should be more explicit in the strategy.

Adjoining one of the fastest growing areas in Australia, the City of Wyndham, Geelong and its neighbouring municipality will have even stronger connections to metropolitan Melbourne in the future. The East Werribee Employment Precinct will undoubtedly attract workers from the Geelong region, particularly its northern suburbs. It is also expected that Geelong will accommodate more people to ease the growth pressures on one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia.

The CfG continues to promote economic development and innovation, infrastructure and capacity and civic leadership and advocacy. All of these initiatives align with the priorities and strategies in Plan Melbourne.

### **3. Plan Melbourne Response**

#### **3.1. Delivering Jobs and Investment**

Plan Melbourne seeks to strengthen the competitiveness of employment land, improve the decision making process for State and regionally significant projects and encourage jobs to be delivered close to where people live. The outcomes which are specifically relevant to investment and jobs in the Geelong region include:

##### **3.1.1. Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct**

The Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct (GREP) should be elevated to a State Significant Industrial Precinct, similar to the industrial precincts identified in Plan Melbourne. The GREP is well connected to the principal freight network (Princes Highway and Geelong Ring Road), standard and broad gauge rail, Port of Geelong and Avalon Airport. The GREP is one of the few Industrial 2 zoned areas in Victoria. It is recognised as a priority employment area in the Geelong region and is projected to create approximately 10,000 direct jobs when fully developed.

##### **3.1.2. Deakin University/Epworth Health precinct**

The Deakin University/Epworth precinct located to the south west of Geelong, should be specifically referenced in Plan Melbourne as a 'National Employment Cluster'. The National Employment Clusters aim to improve the growth of business activity of national significance and leverage off their export and innovation potential. This precinct is identified as a 'new education, health and research hub' in the G21 Regional Growth Plan (RGP), however when developed, this precinct will be an internationally recognised world-class teaching, research and knowledge industries hub. It is, therefore, appropriate to include this precinct as a National Employment Cluster in Plan Melbourne.

##### **3.1.3. Geelong's future as a 'Port City'**

The CfG supports Geelong's future as a 'Port City'. The CfG's involvement in the Port and Land Freight Infrastructure has provided an insight into the importance of the Port of Geelong. Activity in the Port of Geelong is projected to grow from 12.5 million tonnes in 2011-12 to 50-60 million tonnes in 2050. The increased port activity is expected to generate approximately 1800 jobs in the City of Greater Geelong; \$300 million in extra valued added and \$100 million to the household incomes for the Geelong community. Plan Melbourne should recognise the economic relevance of its neighbouring Port City.

##### **3.1.4. Avalon Airport**

The CfG is pleased that Avalon Airport has a specific reference in Plan Melbourne. Avalon is well positioned to be an international freight and logistics hub as well as providing domestic and international passenger services. The CfG supports the future development of this precinct which is expected to generate employment and investment in the Geelong region. The recent announcement of further job losses at Avalon Airport reinforces the need to secure its future development potential.

### **3.1.5. Investment in Geelong Infrastructure and Jobs**

Expansion of Melbourne's Central City precinct is likely to generate additional traffic particularly for the west of Melbourne and Geelong. The CfG seeks more investment and jobs in the Geelong region. However, it is likely some residents will be attracted to employment in Melbourne. At present, approximately 12,000 Geelong residents commute to Melbourne for work and this number is expected to rise. Improvements to the road network and the further development of rail services, including the Regional Rail Link, should be complemented with more incentives for investment and jobs creation in regional areas, including Geelong.

### **3.1.6. Improvements in decision making**

The CfG supports the strategy to improve the decision making processes for all planning matters, but particularly State and regionally-significant projects. Generally, the time taken to decide on significant applications which are of significant economic benefit to the region takes in excess of the statutory 60 day assessment period to be determined. The CfG believes that this needs to change in order to improve Geelong's reputation as a 'go to' City for investment.

## **3.2. Housing Choice and Affordability**

The Geelong region provides affordable housing options for many people struggling to enter the property market in Melbourne.

The CfG supports the delivery of more affordable housing. The CfG notes that it is proposed to prepare municipal housing statements and plan for the future housing needs across the sub-regions identified in Plan Melbourne. The CfG believes that the Western Sub-region (which adjoins the City of Greater Geelong) should also consider Geelong (particularly its northern and western development options) in its forward planning.

Geelong is approximately 35km from the Wyndham growth corridor. The CfG understands that Wyndham, currently growing at about 7.1% per annum, is facing many challenges in managing its unprecedented growth. Wyndham's current strategy is to reduce the target growth rate to a more sustainable level. Subsequently, thousands of people will need to be accommodated elsewhere. The CfG suggests that Geelong is part of the solution.

### **3.3. A More Connected Melbourne**

The CfG supports targeted initiatives to facilitate the future development of Avalon Airport. Increased recognition in the State Planning Policy Framework of the role and function of Avalon Airport is vital. The CfG is also pleased that the proposed transport corridor will be acknowledged in the Planning Scheme and protected from future development.

The CfG requests that additional references to the transport connections to the Geelong region are specified in Plan Melbourne, particularly with the Western sub region. The East Werribee Employment Cluster is projected to generate thousands of jobs and will provide opportunities for Geelong residents. It is critical that the transport infrastructure meets the future requirements for industry and the broader community.

### **3.4. Liveable Communities and Neighbourhoods**

The concept of the '20 minute city', which was first raised in the Discussion Paper, is strongly supported by the CfG. As Geelong continues to grow, it is important that new and existing communities are well serviced with key infrastructure and amenities. The CfG believes that Plan Melbourne should encourage the implementation of the '20 minute city' to cities and regional centres outside of metropolitan Melbourne, such as Geelong and Torquay.

The CfG for Geelong also supports non-profit community based organisations, such as Northern Futures. Northern Futures assists disadvantaged communities in Geelong's northern suburbs with a range of programs. The CfG is pleased that Plan Melbourne recognises that these types of organisations sometimes need special consideration when dealing with complex planning processes.

### **3.5. A State of Cities**

Plan Melbourne states that Victoria's population has increased by 15% in the last ten years with 86% in metropolitan Melbourne. The CfG is pleased that Plan Melbourne aims to rebalance the growth between the metropolitan and regional areas. The CfG is focussed on attracting more people to the Geelong region either through skilled migration or re-location from Melbourne and the surrounding suburbs. Melbourne's population is projected to grow to 6.5 million by 2050 in Plan Melbourne. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) projected released on 27 October 2013 indicated that Melbourne's population will grow to over 7.7 million people by 2050. The CfG believes that the additional 1.2 million people should be accommodated across Victoria, not just Melbourne.

Plan Melbourne identifies the peri-urban areas around Melbourne. The CfG supports economic development in the nominated peri-urban areas i.e. Great Ocean Road, Bellarine Peninsula, Avalon and Western Plains. The CfG is pleased that these areas have been identified, but requests further analysis on how these areas should be managed in the context of the Plan Melbourne objectives and the G21 RGP.



The G21 RGP, approved by Minister Guy in April 2013, aims to grow the Geelong region population to 500,000 by 2040. The CfG believes Geelong, not the wider region, should be reaching for 500,000 people by 2040, or (to align with Plan Melbourne) 2050. This is more realistic given the recent ABS projections.

The G21 RGP suggests that most of the short to medium term housing can be accommodated in the existing areas or strategically identified land. Two further investigation areas, on the northern and western periphery of Geelong are recommended as Further Investigation Areas (FIA). The Draft G21 RGP Implementation Plan (the final plan is expected to be released later in 2013) refined the position on the future need for the investigations areas and suggested that only one area would be required and not for at least 20 years.

The CfG supports appropriate development in the region. The CfG believes that consideration should be given to bringing forward development at Batesford South (Western FIA) and Lovely Banks (Northern FIA). The CfG considers that this may provide more affordable housing choices, which are still close to key infrastructure, amenities and jobs.

The CfG therefore supports the review of regional growth opportunities to initiate proactive action to accelerate growth in Geelong.

Geelong will continue to deliver a range of housing types, including student accommodation in central Geelong and near Deakin University's Waurin Ponds Campus, to meet the growing demand from the student population. The CfG also supports the provision of affordable and social housing projects, such as a Kilgour Place development and the ongoing development of the Armstrong Creek Growth Corridor. Geelong is extremely well positioned to accommodate additional growth. However, to provide new opportunities and investment, more land and streamlined planning processes should be supported. Integrating planning strategies for Melbourne and Regional Victoria is extremely important.

### **3.6. Implementation**

The CfG supports the establishment of the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and is pleased that the MPA's terms of reference will extend to key projects in Geelong. The CfG believes that the MPA's specialised skills and expertise will alleviate workload pressures facing many of the local Councils and drive improved investment and development outcomes in the region.

## **4. Conclusion**

The CfG welcomes Plan Melbourne and recommends that Geelong and some of its key projects are further emphasised within it. The CfG reinforces the need for a strategic 'second city' policy position to be taken for Geelong in order to secure its future. The CfG extends an offer of early engagement to the new MPA and looks forward optimistically to the outcomes of Plan Melbourne.

## **5. Summary of Recommendations**

In summary, the CfG recommends that Plan Melbourne:

- Makes the role of Geelong, as Victoria's second city, more explicit in the Plan Melbourne strategy
- Elevates the Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct to a State Significant Industrial Precinct
- Includes the Deakin University/Epworth precinct as a National Employment Cluster
- Recognises the economic relevance of its neighbouring Port City
- Reduces the time taken to decide on applications which are of significant economic benefit to the region
- Includes additional references to the transport connections to the Geelong region, particularly the Western sub region
- Encourages the implementation of the '20 minute city' to cities and regional centres outside of metropolitan Melbourne, such as Geelong and Torquay
- Carries out further analysis on how the Great Ocean Road, Bellarine Peninsula, Avalon and Western Plains should be managed in the context of the Plan Melbourne objectives and the G21 RGP