



# COMMITTEE FOR GEELONG

SUBMISSION TO THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG –  
DRAFT SETTLEMENT STRATEGY  
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## 1. Introduction

The Committee for Geelong (CfG) is pleased to lodge a submission to the City of Greater Geelong's (CoGG) Draft Settlement Strategy. We congratulate CoGG for undertaking this important strategic project which will guide the future development of Victoria's second largest City to 2036.

The CfG exists to actively advocate for a better future for Geelong. The CfG works collaboratively with a group of stakeholders and influencers to provide strategic leadership and leverage to advocate for opportunities to deliver that growth which will need to be accommodated within the City.

Members of the CfG include local, national and international organisations and individuals, who set aside commercial gain, sectoral interests and personal perspectives to come together to be a united voice on the issues facing Geelong.

The CfG is politically unaligned, independent and shares one passion with its members – the vision of a vibrant, liveable, inclusive and prosperous Geelong. The CfG welcomes the opportunity to comment on CoGG's Draft Settlement Strategy.

## 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. Geelong has recently become Australia's 12<sup>th</sup> largest city.

Geelong has the potential to be a great city, but strong population growth and settlement planning is vital for Geelong to prosper.

In 2017, the CfG undertook a global study tour of eight "second" cities in Europe and the USA to identify strategies to underpin the future vision for Geelong as Victoria's second city. That study tour resulted in the development of a 100-page report entitled *Winning from Second: what Geelong can learn from international second cities (Wf2)*. The report draws insight from the change and economic transformation process of international second cities and was written in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact - Cities Programme and RMIT's Centre for Urban Research, with support from the Commonwealth Bank, CoGG, the Victorian State Government and other partners.

Informed by the findings in the *Wf2* report, the CfG brings a unique perspective to consideration of the Australian Government role in the future of cities.

The CfG believes that Geelong could better position itself at a national level as Victoria's 'second city'. Its infrastructure (the Port of Geelong, Avalon Airport, together with its road and rail connections), world class health and education services, employment and lifestyle opportunities are attracting many new residents and businesses to Geelong.

The *Wf2* project identified key recommendations to improve the economic prosperity and growth of Geelong.

The objective of the *Wf2* report was to discover how exemplar second cities pursued their economic and social viability following economic change. The cities included in the study tour had all seen major companies close or depart, but went ahead to transform their economies through co-ordinated and long-term strategies for industry development.

The study tour included:

1. Eindhoven, The Netherlands
2. Dundee, Scotland
3. Cleveland, USA
4. Pittsburgh, USA
5. Richmond, USA
6. Bristol, UK
7. Liverpool, UK
8. Sheffield, UK

The CfG called on the expertise of Deakin University for help in identifying which cities to include in the study tour. The United Nations Global Compact – Cities Programme and RMIT’s Centre for Urban Research were commissioned to participate in the study tour and compile the *Wf2* report. The research was undertaken in accordance with RMIT University’s regulations in relation to the ethical conduct of research.

As a result of the CfG’s advocacy, Geelong has been designated as Victoria’s second city in Plan Melbourne: “Growing Geelong as Victoria’s second city by prioritising land-use strategies that position the G21 region for accelerated growth and becoming a centre of employment, and re-energising the central business precinct and waterfront zone through the Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan.” Given that growing Geelong as Victoria’s Second City is now in the planning scheme, the CfG believes the time is right to build on this.

The CfG has actively participated in the development of CoGG’s Our Future ‘A Clever and Creative Region’ vision for the city. The CfG is concerned, however, that there is insufficient emphasis in the Our Future vision - and also CoGG’s Draft Settlement Strategy - on accelerating population growth of Geelong.

The CfG supports sustainable development of the City where settlement is balanced across urban Geelong, with a focus on Central Geelong and the new growth areas of Lovely Banks and Armstrong Creek, and also the Bellarine. Lifestyle and affordability are key drivers for people moving to Geelong and the future planning needs to provide a range of options.

### **3. Settlement Strategy Response**

#### **3.1. Growth Targets**

Geelong, as Victoria's second city, is afforded many advantages including its proximity to key rail, sea and air transport infrastructure which provides good access to Melbourne, Victoria's State Capital, regional Victorian, Australia and international markets. CoGG's Draft Settlement Strategy acknowledges Geelong as one of the fastest growing regions in Victoria. Geelong has an excellent, health and education sector and growing professional services industry, particularly in social insurance. Geelong is a growing city, but has the potential to be a great city.

Melbourne is growing at unprecedented levels, with its population to reach 10 million by 2050. An additional 1.6 million homes will be required in Melbourne by 2050, and Geelong is poised to accommodate Melbourne's growth. Developments at Armstrong Creek, Lara, Lovely Banks and carefully planned development on the Bellarine, together with cross-municipality infill development, can provide a range of housing and employment opportunities for future residents. Armstrong Creek to the south of Geelong is one of the fastest growth areas in the State.

The G21 Regional Growth Plan provides a framework for settlement planning across the G21 region, including Geelong. The G21 Regional Plan sets an aspirational growth rate of 2.5%, which has been adopted in CoGG's Draft Settlement Strategy. However, the CfG considers that, for the region, this is too low – especially when Melbourne and its western suburbs will grow at a much higher rate. The CfG recommends that CoGG plans for a higher growth rate of at least 4%. Bernard Salt, in his Bigger can be Better Report commissioned by the CfG, identified 'out-of-the-box' thinking that the Geelong region could reach 750,000 by 2050 - which is far more aspirational than the 500,000 currently planned for.

#### **3.2. Accommodating Growth**

Geelong is well positioned to accommodate significant growth in varying forms including new greenfield development and high density built form. Many people that are relocating to Geelong are drawn to the city and coastal areas for "Turquoise lifestyle" reasons. However, whilst high density living may be attractive for some, the CfG believes that a range of housing choices should be provided for the Greater Geelong community. Restrictions to settlement boundaries which, if not addressed by CoGG now, could have serious impacts on housing affordability. As Geelong continues to grow, the City is becoming less affordable and it is therefore critical to provide diversity in offerings across the municipality.

Reliable and improved transport connections are fundamental to facilitate the future growth of Geelong. On average 12,000 people commute to Melbourne from Geelong for work, with 4,000 commuting into Geelong. As described above, the CfG believes that the projected growth of Geelong is a conservative estimate; the region is expected to increase to 500,000 people by 2050. Future development needs to be delivered in a sustainable manner, and the CfG strongly supports investment in key transport infrastructure to reduce the pressure on the road network.

The CfG encourages sustainable growth of the city which is respectful of the finite resources and infrastructure pressures. Geelong and the G21 region provide strategic opportunities to deliver environmental innovation, whilst maintaining the liveability appeal of Geelong and also accommodate new growth. The CfG advocated for a long term vision for Geelong and we are delighted that the Council has now adopted its 30 year vision for a Clever and Creative Future.

Geelong is transforming from its traditional manufacturing base to a more diverse economic structure supported by health, education, service industries, start-ups and advanced manufacturing. The city has an exciting future, but a multi-helix support structure is required that would include input and investment by all levels of government, the private sector, academia and the community.

The CfG agrees the future growth of Geelong needs to be carefully planned and we are pleased to note that the Northern and Western Growth Areas are progressing. However, the CfG does have concerns that the planning timeframes are too long and need to speed up in order to capture opportunities from Melbourne. Geelong, particularly the northern suburbs, are attractive to residents in Western Melbourne and also for millennials wanting to enter the property market.

In respect to the Bellarine, the CfG believes that growth should be supported in the Bellarine in a planned manner, and we consider that additional greenfield development is not necessarily sprawl. Planned growth, which accommodates new open space, is based on walkability and the delivery of new services to local communities, should be accommodated across Geelong, including the Bellarine. Ocean Grove, Clifton Springs, Leopold and smaller coastal settlements should all be accommodating some new sustainable residential growth.

The projected growth of the Western Corridor in Plan Melbourne is up to an additional 650,000 people by 2050 and some of these people could easily be accommodated in the City of Greater Geelong. Geelong should be attracting future residents for a range of reasons including justification for improved infrastructure, investment and job creation and growing the economic base of the city. The CfG welcomes CoGG's Draft Settlement Strategy as another tool to attract new residents from Melbourne and other places.


#### 4. Recommendation

The CfG welcomes the opportunity to lodge this submission, and we recommend that CoGG's Draft Settlement Strategy adopt an accelerated growth target for the municipality, with strategies to manage the faster growth rate beyond 2.5%.

#### 5. Contact Details

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