



## G21 Draft Economic Development Strategy

### Submission from the Committee for Geelong

The Committee for Geelong is a highly focused group with a strategic commitment to developing Geelong's social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions.

The organisation was established in 2001 by a group of Geelong leaders who saw an opportunity to collaborate and thereby serve the Geelong community.

Membership of the organisation now includes national and international private sector organisations with a presence in Geelong as well as local firms – all committed to developing Geelong's social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions.

Along with key public sector and non-profit organisations serving the Geelong region the Committee for Geelong is uniquely placed to advocate on strategic issues affecting the Geelong region.

### Comments on the draft Strategy

The Committee for Geelong congratulates G21 on the preparation of the Strategy and is encouraged by the cooperation shown between councils in the development of the plan.

The five “Game Changers” identified in the plan:

- a. Completion of the Ring Road with Surf Coast, Bellarine Peninsula, Bannockburn and Colac Connections
- b. Geelong City Centre Reactivation
- c. Coordinated Delivery of Critical Infrastructure to Support Growth
- d. Globally Significant Innovation & Research Centre and
- e. G21 is Open for Business

are noted and generally supported by the Committee for Geelong.

However as the draft Strategy notes, these types of strategies require effective implementation to affect beneficial change on the economic development and investment environment that would otherwise have prevailed in the region. In that sense, the strategy lacks a clear articulation of a deliver mechanism that will provide effective implementation for the Game Changers outlined in the draft Strategy.

It is the view of the Committee that a dedicated delivery mechanism will be crucial to ensure that these Game Changers and their associated benefits are realised. The Committee makes no prescriptions here as to whether such a delivery mechanism should be entirely private, semi-private or entirely public, it will however need a mandate to deliver across local and State government boundaries and organisation silos.



The Committee has noted the success of other place-based economic development organisations in the UK, United States and indeed in Australia in some areas of Queensland and closer to home in Mildura. The final model adopted for a Geelong region economic delivery mechanism should draw on the lessons of these other place based economic development organisations. In particular such a locally based organisation will require clear targets and responsibilities that are acknowledged and actively supported by all levels of government if it is to have any chance of success.

What also appears to be lacking from the plan is the need to highlight the importance of education and skills development in our region. Both Deakin and The Gordon have sent out strong messages that they want to lead in the regeneration of our city and not be a trailing partner. The plan should acknowledge the fact that these two key organisations are explicitly linked to the economic wealth and wellbeing of our city.

It is also noted that the regeneration of disadvantaged suburbs in Geelong is well and truly under way and this is creating enormous change and economic benefit for the region. The Committee takes the view that these regeneration projects if completed and done properly will be very much a Game Changer for the City. Rather than noting that the reactivation and development of these areas will need to be considered in the context of consideration of the Geelong City Centre Reactivation - it may be that the role and potential contribution of these areas will need to be more explicitly recognised in the plan.

Finally the Committee notes that one of the Game Changers is "Open for Business" and it is not clear what exactly that term means. Open for Business is a term that has been used widely in Geelong for some time but there is no tangible evidence to say that it is attracting the level of investment within the time frames required. There are numerous examples globally where an Open for Business mindset manifests as a seamless integration of the local regulatory environment that supports investment ready project approval processes. These are our competitor locations for global investment flows and the governance and delivery mechanism model should hone in on the Open for Business meaning and couple that with the people, processes and organisations responsible for ensuring the tag "Open for Business" is truly being adhered to.

Again congratulations on the formation of the plan but is now time for Geelong and the region to seriously consider delivering on the aspirations outlined in the draft Strategy.

Yours sincerely

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Chairman  
Committee for Geelong