



Plan Melbourne Refresh
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
GPO Box 2392
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Committee for Geelong (CfG) is delighted to be provided with the opportunity to lodge a submission to Plan Melbourne Refresh.

Please note that the CfG's submission is not confidential and we therefore give consent for it to be made public.

Thank you for taking the time to review our submission and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

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COMMITTEE FOR GEELONG

SUBMISSION

PLAN MELBOURNE REFRESH

18 DECEMBER 2015

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1. Introduction

The Committee for Geelong (CfG) is pleased to lodge a submission to the Plan Melbourne Refresh Discussion Paper October 2015.

Please note that the CfG's submission is not confidential and we give permission for it to be published.

The CfG is an independent, member-based organisation that advocates for the best overall long-term outcomes for Geelong. Our members represent the broad political spectrum and a breadth of industry both by sector and size. We work with members, leaders, stakeholders and governments to provide strategic leadership and influence to leverage the economic potential of the region to make Geelong a world-class place. As an independent advocate for Geelong, the CfG has a history of achieving genuine results by actively looking at ways to solve problems and confront challenges.

The CfG welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Plan Melbourne Refresh, which refines the vision for Melbourne's growth to 2050 and will have a substantial impact on the future development of the Geelong region. This submission builds on the CfG's previous submission in 2013.

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 better position itself 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.

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.

3. Plan Melbourne Refresh Response

The CfG is pleased that many of our recommended changes to Plan Melbourne have been considered in the Discussion Paper and will be implemented in Plan Melbourne 2016. This includes Initiative 6.2.2 which will be re-worded from 'review regional city growth opportunities' to 'strengthen regional city growth opportunities'.

3.1. Second City policy for Geelong

The CfG is particularly delighted that Initiative 6.3.1 'Bring together planning strategies for Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria' in Plan Melbourne will be updated to:

"designate Geelong as Victoria's second city and prioritise game changing land use strategies such as those for the Avalon Airport, Port of Geelong, improved arterial road connections and high quality health, tertiary education and research infrastructure that positions the G21 region

for accelerated growth and as a centre for employment and higher order service provision for Melbourne's west".

The CfG recommends that Plan Melbourne 2016 includes a specific policy action to develop a 'Second City' policy for Geelong, which reflects Initiative 6.3.1. This policy will define the strategic directions and implementation strategies to reinforce Geelong's position as Victoria's second largest city. At present, Geelong does not have a unified, clear and articulated vision for its second city position. A new second city policy will build on the G21 Regional Growth Strategy and other strategic work.

It is anticipated that the second city discussion could also form part of a national policy framework about the role and strategic priorities of second cities throughout Australia. It is clear from the literature that long term underinvestment in second cities presents risks of national economic underperformance and, given this, some countries are pro-actively developing explicit policies for their second-tier cities. The CfG believes that a strong second city policy for the largest city economies (outside of the major cities in each State) will greatly benefit Australia into the future. In this context, it is important that Plan Melbourne 2016 includes a second city policy for Geelong and leads the way. By doing so, the State of Victoria will have the opportunity to create an inaugural policy direction for second cities in our nation.

4. Refinements to Plan Melbourne 2016

The CfG provides some additional refinements to Plan Melbourne 2016:

4.1. National Employment Clusters

Plan Melbourne Refresh seeks to strengthen the competitiveness of the "National Employment Clusters" which make a significant contribution to the national economy. We request that the Deakin University/Epworth precinct located to the south west of Geelong, be specifically referenced in Plan Melbourne 2016 as a 'National Employment Cluster'.

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. The inclusion of this nationally significant precinct in Plan Melbourne 2016 is expected to facilitate investment and employment outside the metropolitan area and help drive population growth in Geelong. It is, therefore, appropriate to include this precinct as a National Employment Cluster in Plan Melbourne 2016.

4.2. Extractive Industries

The CfG supports the implementation of the outcomes from the Extractive Industries Taskforce to ensure that there is an economic supply of materials for construction and road industries in appropriate locations.

4.3. Transport Connections

The CfG is actively seeking improved road and rail connections throughout Victoria, and particularly between Melbourne and Geelong. Our 'Geelong on Track' initiative aims to improve rail services between Melbourne and Geelong and within Geelong. 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 job creation in regional areas, including Geelong.

Improvements to road infrastructure connections are critical to Geelong's future growth. Investment in the Western Distributor project will ease the traffic, and we encourage the government to continue to focus on long term solutions for connections from western Victoria to eastern Victoria.

4.4. Second Port

The CfG is pleased that Infrastructure Victoria will provide independent advice to the Victorian State Government regarding the most appropriate location for Victoria's second container port. The CfG Geelong supports that the Government commence its planning in the short term and secure a location for a second container port long before it is needed.

4.5. Avalon Airport

Avalon Airport is referenced in Plan Melbourne Refresh and its rail corridor is now protected through appropriate planning mechanisms. Avalon Airport is important to the Geelong economy and the recent announcement to increase passenger services expands its role in supporting tourism investment in our region. A much needed rail connection will secure Avalon's position as Victoria's second airport.

4.6. Housing

The Plan Melbourne Refresh identifies the need to "articulate long term land use policies and reforms to meet forecast housings needs and expand housing choice and affordability". The Geelong region provides diverse and affordable housing options for many people struggling to enter the property market in Melbourne.

Plan Melbourne Refresh sets a 70/30 target for new housing in established and green field areas. Regional areas, such as Geelong, offer an alternative to managing the future growth, therefore Plan Melbourne 2016 should also set a housing growth target for regional areas. The implementation strategies proposed in the Discussion Paper could be easily modified to prioritise release of land in regional areas.

Geelong is approximately 35km from the Wyndham growth corridor. The CfG understands that Wyndham 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 setting a target for housing growth in regional areas will help manage growth in high growth locations, such as Wyndham.

4.7. 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. We note that the recently established Geelong Authority is not referenced in the proposed changes to Plan Melbourne. Given the emphasis of renewal in Central Geelong in Initiative 6.2.2, we suggest that reference be made of the Geelong Authority in Plan Melbourne, including its priorities and short term actions.

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

5. Conclusion

The CfG welcomes Plan Melbourne Refresh and we look forward optimistically to the outcomes of the update to Plan Melbourne.

6. Recommendations

The CfG recommends that Plan Melbourne:

- 6.1. includes a specific action to develop a 'Second City' policy for Geelong, which reflects Initiative 6.3.1.
- 6.2. specifically references Deakin University/Epworth precinct, located to the south west of Geelong, as a 'National Employment Cluster'.
- 6.3. focusses on long term solutions for connections from western Victoria to eastern Victoria.
- 6.4. seeks to assist in securing the location for a second container port long before it is needed.
- 6.5. seeks to secure a rail connection for Avalon Airport and position it as Victoria's second airport.
- 6.6. sets a target for housing growth in regional areas to help manage growth in high growth locations.
- 6.7. make reference to the Geelong Authority, including its priorities and short term actions.

7. Contact Details

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