



28 March 2013

Plan Melbourne  
Department of Planning and Community Development  
1 Spring Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

**RE: Submission to “Melbourne, let’s talk about the future: Discussion Paper”**

I am pleased to present the Committee for Geelong’s (the Committee) submission to the paper “Melbourne, let’s talk about the future: Discussion Paper” (the Discussion Paper).

The Committee is the Geelong region’s pre-eminent advocacy organisation representing the interests of a wide range of business and community organisations.

For over 10 years the Committee has advocated for policies and initiatives that advance economic and social opportunities for Geelong and surrounds.

As Victoria’s second largest city and with close proximity to Melbourne, in many aspects the future growth of Geelong will align with opportunities arising from the continued growth and expansion of Melbourne.

Geelong’s population is expected to grow to 500,000 towards the middle of this century; and the Committee see a major role for Geelong in driving economic and social outcomes that will benefit Melbourne as well as Geelong.

As Melbourne’s western fringe continues to grow, the Committee believes Geelong will play a key role in providing accessible and diverse employment opportunities for thousands of Melbourne residents.

Take transport infrastructure as an example. As growth in international and domestic aircraft passenger movements increase and as Port of Melbourne terminals approach capacity, Avalon Airport, the Port of Geelong and the option of a Bay West intermodal transport hub, are well placed to help Melbourne realise the economic benefits arising from this growth.



Whilst the primary drivers for this growth may originate outside of Geelong, Geelong has the unique capacity and asset base to respond to it. Long term growth strategies that harness this opportunity will help Geelong grow as a first class city that adds significantly to Melbourne's reputation and value proposition as a place to live, invest, work and do business.

In this context, the Committee for Geelong welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Discussion Paper.

### **Geelong Context**

The G21 Regional Growth Plan includes a number of critical elements and directions which are appropriate considerations in the context of the Discussion Paper. In summary the key elements and direction of the Regional Growth Plan are:

- Growth of urban Geelong & Central Geelong – the Growth Plan provides capacity for the region to achieve a population of 500,000 by 2050 (based on current growth rates) but also to accommodate closer to 600,000 in response to more vigorous growth activity centred around a strong, vibrant and connected regional city and city centre in Geelong linked to a network of larger district towns;
- Designation of key settlement breaks – creating distinctive settlements, preserving key landscapes, buffering significant assets and particularly providing a clear break between urban Geelong and Werribee;
- Building on Avalon Airport and the Port of Geelong to support job and economic growth;
- Employment growth built on strategic strengths and competitive advantages of freight and logistics, retail and tourism, education, health and research;
- Strategic Infrastructure planning and investment focused on building on existing infrastructure capacity, networks and key strategic linkage opportunities.

As a general comment, the Committee recommends that the priorities and directions of the G21 Regional Growth Plan be considered in the development of the Metropolitan Strategy. Particularly where strategic economic assets in our region are able to be utilised to provide benefit to a growing population in Melbourne's West, and, where relevant, to alleviate capacity constraints experienced in Melbourne.

### **Principle 1 – A Distinctive Melbourne**

The Committee supports this principle; however we would like to see greater reference to the benefits of ensuring Geelong also maintains its own discrete identity.



Access and connectedness to a genuine premier/non-capital city, which has its own suite of offerings, is a great asset for Melbourne.

The 'Two Cities on the Bay' concept reinforces the unique role Geelong can play in adding to Melbourne's value proposition. It adds layers of diversity to Melbourne that will appeal to residents, visitors and businesses alike.

Ensuring Geelong retains a separate identity is critical in this equation. The use of green breaks to limit development to the south west toward Geelong should be considered in the Strategy as a means of protecting the distinctive identity of Geelong and allowing both cities to leverage the unique benefits each has to offer.

#### **Principle 2 – A globally connected and competitive city**

The Committee supports this principle and encourages the Metropolitan Strategy to look specifically at the assets the Geelong region has that can be utilised to support the international connectedness and competitiveness of Melbourne and Victoria as a whole.

Geelong has a natural convergence of road, rail, sea and air freight infrastructure making the region uniquely positioned to service future trade activity in and out of Melbourne and Victoria.

As Melbourne's freight hubs continue toward capacity, the role that regions such as Geelong can play in meeting future demand must be considered.

Geelong plays an important part in Victoria's freight and logistics distribution network, providing a key linkage between adjoining regions and Melbourne. Geelong's food and agricultural product processing and distribution along with the major transport corridors, the Port of Geelong and Avalon Airport all provide critical connections with Melbourne, other Australian states and internationally.

The Committee, in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong and port users are currently conducting a study into the 20-50 year future of the Port of Geelong, due to be released in June/July 2013.

The Committee believes that any thorough analysis of a major expansion of bulk freight over a 30-50 year time frame must consider opportunities arising from the Port of Geelong and the Bay West Proposal.



Similarly the development of Avalon Airport as a second international airport has the potential to significantly drive increased overseas tourism and visitation to Melbourne and the region, as well as increased airfreight. As Tullamarine approaches capacity, Avalon's strategic location provides opportunities that cannot be realised elsewhere. It is a curfew free airport, has the potential to become an international hub for general aviation, provide dedicated export opportunities for food producers and offer an alternative option for both domestic and international travellers.

Particularly as the west of Melbourne continues to expand, the Geelong regions economic assets will become increasingly important as a source of employment for Melbourne's burgeoning western suburbs.

Other projects such as the Yarra Street Pier cruise ship passenger terminal have the potential to provide an important cruise ship destination which, with good transport links to Melbourne, adds to the global connectedness of Melbourne and reinforces the role of Geelong as a world class second tier city.

The region's academic institutions are also world class. Deakin University and the CSIRO's Australian Animal Health Laboratory are leading international research organisations. With the expansion of the Deakin's Waurin Ponds Campus for example, and inclusion of the Epworth Medical School, Deakin and the Geelong region will enjoy a significantly enhanced profile on the national and international stage. This campus will incorporate AFFRIC and a complete carbon fibre production facility. This significant centre for innovation will promote Geelong as a '*univer-city*', with direct accessibility to Melbourne and all it has to offer (anyone with access to City Link can get to the Waurin Ponds campus with only 2 traffic lights).

The Geelong regions proximity and accessibility to Melbourne, with a range of economic, academic, and tourism opportunities, is a great asset that will help promote Melbourne as a distinctive and attractive city for people to visit, live, work and do businesses.

### **Principle 3 – Social and Economic Participation**

The Committee supports this principle and believes the draft strategy should acknowledge the Geelong region as an important source of employment for people seeking affordable housing in Melbourne's western and southern western suburbs.

Geelong's local economy is constantly evolving, with strong growth in education, health, innovation and the arts. The Committee believes this growth in new and diverse industries, coupled with a



strong manufacturing base means the Geelong region will have an important role to play in providing a wide range of employment opportunities for Melbourne's western fringe.

Conversely, Geelong can also offer affordable housing for people wishing to work in Melbourne.

Already several thousand people commute to Melbourne for work from Geelong every day and as the region's population continues to grow, it is expected that the number of commuters will also grow.

Ensuring adequate investment in transport infrastructure between Melbourne and Geelong that ensures accessibility, is efficient and reliable will afford people flexibility when choosing where to live and work and is critical to encouraging social and economic participation.

#### **Principle 4 – Strong Communities**

The Committee supports this principle. Key to having strong communities is ensuring they have access to jobs, services and a wide range of cultural and recreational activities.

As previously discussed, Geelong is well positioned to grow into a major employer for Melbourne's west, while also providing easy access to a range of services and activities that will enhance the lifestyle of people living on Melbourne's western fringe.

#### **Principle 5 – environmental resilience**

The Committee supports the importance of green wedges both from environmental values as well as in an urban planning context.

However the Committee would like to see greater emphasis placed on the importance of green wedges in creating the necessary 'breathing space' between metropolitan and regional areas.

They also form the interface between urban and rural communities which are important for settlement setting form, character and lifestyle quality. In this context there is also a strong connection with **Principle 3**.

Geelong is included within the metropolitan Melbourne's peri-urban area, and the management of green wedge spaces between Melbourne and Geelong is critical to protecting the unique identity of both centres, creating a distinct yet cohesive social separation between Melbourne and Geelong and delivering effective and environmentally sensitive planning in the peri-urban area.



Green wedges form an integral protection of the many assets rural areas provide, including important scenic and tourism opportunities, open space, agricultural production, biodiversity as well as buffers for critical assets such as water supply. These assets add significantly to Melbourne both through economic activity and providing a life style with access to cultural and natural assets outside of the metropolitan area.

As discussed above, Geelong has much to offer in this regard, and Melbourne's growth should proceed only in the context of these assets being protected.

#### **Principle 6 – polycentric city linked to regional cities**

The Committee supports this principle and its focus on jobs creation.

Geelong is uniquely positioned to provide a range of employment opportunities for Melbourne, particularly in the high growth areas of Melbourne's west. Avalon Airport, retail, higher education, health sciences, and opportunities arising from the development of enhanced transport linkages via road, sea and rail all present significant employment opportunities.

Effective transport linkages are key to realising this potential. Similarly, these linkages are critical to those who live in Geelong and work in Melbourne.

It is critical that Melbourne's growth should be supported by a clear vision for a transport system that is linked to the role of regional areas and centres, such as Geelong. With the designated growth areas in Melbourne's west around Werribee within a short commute of Geelong, Geelong is well placed to be a key employment area for the west of Melbourne, but the transport system must grow to accommodate this need.

Across Victoria, regional cities have a critical role to play. Cities like Geelong provide a range of housing, employment and education options. And with such strong transport linkages between Melbourne and many regional centres, the role that cities like Geelong play in supporting the workforce and population of Melbourne is significant.

However for regional cities to be attractive alternatives for people to live and work, they must be multi-dimensional.

Continued investment in regional arts, culture and sport are critical in this context. Need to give people reasons to feel that, if they are living in a regional city, that they have access to a range of cultural and sporting opportunities without always having to travel to Melbourne.



The more attractive we can make regional cities the more Victoria's population growth can be decentralised away from Melbourne.

Revitalising regional centres with strong linkages to Melbourne should be a priority for investment. In Geelong's case revitalisation of Central Geelong (Vision 2 project) and investment in arts and culture should be part of a broader polycentric city strategy.

### **Principle 7 – Living Locally – A 20 minute city**

Geelong itself has much experience of operating as a 20 minute city. It is also the only regional city capable of offering a 20 minute commute from Melbourne's outer west by road (freeway) and V-line passenger rail services. This means Geelong can provide a range of more affordable housing options along with a range of employment opportunities and solutions for Melbourne.

Geelong also presents a number of opportunities for significant employment nodes based around the Port, Avalon and Geelong Ring road Employment Precinct. Other clusters are well developed in Geelong built around education (two Deakin University campuses), health and associated research and development (with CSIRO, AAHL).

### **Principle 8 – Infrastructure investment that supports city growth**

The Committee supports this principle; however we encourage the future infrastructure demands and opportunities for Melbourne to incorporate consideration of the assets offered in Geelong.

Our port and aviation assets in particular, coupled with our strategic positioning with proximity to Melbourne, productive agricultural land and internationally significant tourism attractions means Geelong has much to offer as a complement to growth of Melbourne.

It does however require long term and strategic planning for these benefits to be realised. The Committee for Geelong respectfully requests that those responsible for the future planning of Melbourne seek to integrate development and growth of the city as much as possible with opportunities in regional Victoria.

As Victoria's second largest city, and with world class economic and natural assets, Geelong is well placed to partner with Melbourne to help realise potential and opportunity that will be to the benefit of all Victorians.

### **Principle 9 – Leadership and partnership**



The Committee supports this principle and would welcome the opportunity to provide input in on relevant elements of the draft strategy.

As Victoria's second largest city, and the closest to Melbourne, Geelong's potential to support the future growth of Melbourne stands out.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this strategy.

If you require any further information, please contact myself or Rebecca Casson, Executive Director of the Committee for Geelong, on 03 5227 8075.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Betts'.

Michael Betts  
Chairman, Committee for Geelong