



G21 Draft Regional Growth Plan
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 Growth Plan

The Committee for Geelong welcomes the preparation of the plan and welcomes the engagement of the constituent councils in the development of a deliberate growth strategy for the region that is in reality, overdue.

From the outset the Committee acknowledges that while various levels of government have their hands on a diverse range of levers for residential, industrial and commercial growth - there will be growth in the region. This growth can be shaped and promoted to deliver better economic, environmental and social outcomes but it is, of course, unavoidable. The Committee is of the view that there is much more to be gained from embracing this growth than ignoring it.

The Committee welcomes G21's focus on the regional growth and believes that planning for regional growth should be the key focus for G21 now and into the future.

The Committee is pleased to also note that that the Draft Regional Growth Plan emanated from one of the key outcomes of the Economic Impact Study of the Ring Road commissioned by the Committee and its partners some four years ago. However like those aspirational individuals and organisations who started planning for a Geelong Ring Road 40 years ago, the Committee believes that the Growth plan could be more aspirational- the plan in its current draft form is perhaps too conservative in what it seeks to portray as the region's future.

On a State wide level the Plan needs to better acknowledge the role the Geelong region can play as a growth node of state and national importance. It needs to be further developed cognisant of the work being done or to be done as part of the Melbourne Metropolitan Strategy. There are already investment flows that recognise the greater attraction of the Geelong region comparative to, for instance, the outer south east suburbs of Melbourne. Geelong will be a significant partner



with Melbourne in delivering the State's economic, employment and population growth. As our locational, transport and lifestyle advantages become better known this trend advantage will continue to be a strong one.

At a local or regional level the plan should not shirk the need for well-planned population growth across all the G21 constituent councils and their own local growth nodes. It would also not be sufficient, in the Committee's view, to make provision for population growth that did not also acknowledge real market release rates as opposed to possible release rates. This is particularly the case in some urban fringe areas where land ownership can be relatively concentrated or stranded by lack of infrastructure and these factors can militate against competitive land markets that would otherwise cater for growth.

The land market release rates, measured and planned, should be set against population growth target rates and it is the Committee's view that a population growth rate of no less than 3% should be set across the region and notionally allocated against growth centres that must have, as we have noted, a competitive land market.

The Committee also submits that the Geelong region is now large enough in both population and economic terms to warrant an equivalent body to Melbourne's Growth Areas Authority. There are a number of areas in the Geelong region where provision of community infrastructure in the form of schools, health care, etc., has had to be retrofitted into developments. There is a need for a new organisation to manage both growth and infrastructure planning to ensure timely infrastructure development and delivery.

In the current resource constrained Federal and State infrastructure funding environments such a body should be charged with developing innovative funding models for infrastructure provision including ways in which private sector funding can be better utilised and supported to bring new commercial, industrial and residential estates onto the market.

In particular large commercial precincts such as the proposed national transport and logistics precinct will need significant investment to make real the required efficient connections with the Port of Geelong and Avalon Airport. A missing link in delivering the potential private sector deal flow that could resolve these infrastructure short falls is a body with the mandate and the expertise to do so. A Geelong based growth authority with the broad remit to resolve these sorts of issues will be a key element in actually getting them resolved, either through private or public funding.

Finally, whether it ends up as the responsibility of a growth authority or constituent councils there is a need for regionally consistent and coordinated messages and promotional materials and programs that support residential and commercial growth. The lessons gained from previous "Smart Move" campaigns along with other examples of investor and resident ready promotional campaigns should be re-examined as part of the development of a strategy to deliver against regional growth targets.



The Committee for Geelong and its partners are supportive of well managed growth in the region and will be happy to assist G21 and its team in delivering much of what is articulated in this response.

Yours sincerely

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

Michael Betts
Chairman
Committee for Geelong