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VIA: [Making a submission :: Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy :: Engage Victoria](#)

To whom it may concern

The Committee for Geelong provides strategic leadership and influence to leverage the economic and social prosperity of our city-region. An independent, non-partisan, membership-based, not for profit organisation, the Committee for Geelong works collaboratively with an authoritative group of stakeholders and influencers to design Geelong's best future.

Please accept this document as the submission from the Committee for Geelong to Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy consultation process.

As part of the consultation process, we were engaged in the forum held on 4 February 2021 where elements of this submission were addressed. Please accept our contribution to that forum as part of our submission.

We also draw your attention to a research report published late year by the Committee for Geelong in partnership with Deakin University: Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](#).

The Committee for Geelong commissioned this research to provide guidance to decision makers in the region as they work to temper the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to distil and pursue opportunities arising from this fundamental shock to the Australian society, economy, and settlement system.

This research paper adds to the public discussion of regional resilience, how and why Greater Geelong has apparently bounced back from major economic shocks in the past, and how these lessons might apply in a post-COVID-19 future. Moreover, these analyses will allow us to determine whether regional resilience will be confined to moving back to the normal, pre-crisis situation (adaptation), or whether these shocks are critical junctures leading to transformative resilience and to new paths emerging out of the crisis.

This research paper presents historical and comparative analysis and offers a set of recommendations for consideration in four parts:

Part 1 examines the economic transformation and resilience of the Greater Geelong economy over time and reviews the diversified specialisation of key sectors including manufacturing, retail, health, education, tourism, public administration, professional and scientific services, construction, energy, and creative industries.

Part 2 considers the enablers that facilitate this resilience, in particular the role of population growth, government policy, and community leadership.



Part 3 examines COVID-19 responses from governments and others around the world in the context of other shocks to regions, such as the Global Financial Crisis (2007 to 2009), as well as Australian initiatives and possibilities that are emerging from the current crisis. These include the rise of online working, the potential move of larger populations from metropolitan areas to the regions, creating a circular economy, progressing social inclusion, and revitalising manufacturing.

Part 4 revisits the national and state economic trends, and considers Greater Geelong before and after COVID-19. Drawing on the preceding historical analysis and international exemplars, it then explores the implications for Greater Geelong and considers how the Committee for Geelong might collaborate and capitalise on emergent opportunities to ensure ongoing regional resilience. Priority recommendations are provided for key sectors, the community and for critical enablers of regional resilience in Greater Geelong.

We ask that Infrastructure Victoria consider the Resilient Geelong research report as part of the Committee for Geelong's submission. Throughout our response below, we have also made reference to specific sections in Resilient Geelong to support our feedback.

In terms of our approach in direct reference to your draft strategy, we have focused on commentary related to:

Section 04, Develop regional Victoria recommendations 77 – 95.

Section 04 Develop regional Victoria

4.1 Enhance market access and productivity

77. Deliver funding certainty for regional road maintenance and upgrades

Within two years, specify clear levels of service for each type of regional road and bridge. Following this, dedicate an ongoing program to fund regional road and bridge maintenance and upgrades to meet these service levels. Funding should be prioritised based on improving safety, decreasing vehicle emissions, and lifting economic productivity.

The Committee for Geelong agrees in principle with this recommendation. We would recommend that advice regarding regional priorities for road funding is informed by the priorities as outlined by the G21 Geelong Region Alliance and we specifically draw attention to the need to fund upgrades to road infrastructure for the arrival of the Spirit of Tasmania to Corio Quay. A \$15 million investment in road upgrades is essential to cater for the increased volume of vehicles accessing the Spirit of Tasmania, scheduled to begin operations out of Geelong from 2022. More broadly, upgraded road networks servicing GeelongPort are needed to increase freight efficiency, support general port business requirements, and deliver on the actions defined within the Port Development Strategy.



We ask that road planning and funding for the North and West Growth Area (C395) is also considered. Any road infrastructure needs to address the needs of both passenger and freight.

<https://committeeforgeelong.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/201218-Principal-Freight-Network-submission-Committee-for-Geelong-18DEC2020.pdf>

78. Revise the Murray Basin Rail project plan

Immediately revise the Murray Basin Rail project plan, informed by a published business case review.

The Committee for Geelong has no specific comment related to this recommendation.

79. Fund an ongoing regional rail freight maintenance program

Immediately fund an ongoing periodic regional freight rail maintenance program, informed by a publicly available network asset management plan.

The Committee for Geelong has been calling for an integrated transport plan for the G21 region. Please refer to the attached submission for more detail.

<https://committeeforgeelong.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/201218-Principal-Freight-Network-submission-Committee-for-Geelong-18DEC2020.pdf>

80. Co-invest to bring faster broadband to regional business precincts

In the next five years, create a regional broadband fund to co-invest in bringing high speed broadband to strategic business precincts in regional cities, informed by independent assessments.

The Committee for Geelong has been working with NBNCo on the recent announcement of a Business Fibre Zone to Geelong [Geelong businesses earmarked for cheaper, high-speed NBN - Surf Coast Times \(timesnewsgroup.com.au\)](https://www.timesnewsgroup.com.au). This is a great initiative by NBNCo.

In terms of broadband need, we would request that specific attention is put to the need for local schools. We draw your attention to the G21 Region Secondary Schools and Community Digital Learning Hub request.

[G21 Regional Secondary Schools And Community Digital Learning Hub And Ecosystem - G21.](#)



4.2 Unlock regional economic growth opportunities

81. Upgrade power supply for agriculture and regional manufacturing

In the next five years, contribute toward strategic power supply infrastructure upgrades for agriculture and regional manufacturing, where an independent assessment demonstrates significant potential for increased productivity, competitiveness and growth.

The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation in principle. Please refer to Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](#) for more detail regarding the specific, regional areas of specialisation and growth in agriculture, manufacturing and advanced manufacturing.

82. Invest in regional nature-based tourism infrastructure

In the next five years, invest in nature-based tourism infrastructure at Mount Hotham, the Grampians, Wilsons Promontory, and East Gippsland. Develop a Victorian nature-based tourism strategy to guide industry development and prioritise further investments.

The Committee for Geelong recommends that Geelong and Great Ocean Road tourism opportunities are included in this recommendation. We refer to Tourism Greater Geelong and Bellarine and the relevant Great Ocean Road tourism bodies for more detail on the significant work and importance of our region in this investment recommendation. This will also need to reference the Geelong City Deal and current infrastructure investments that need to be leveraged and supported over the long term. [Geelong City Deal \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](#)

83. Develop a Victorian Aboriginal tourism strategy

Partner with Traditional Owners to develop a Victorian Aboriginal tourism strategy in the next five years to guide future Aboriginal tourism investments, including through Joint Management Plans.

The Committee for Geelong fully supports this recommendation and believes Aboriginal tourism, cultural storytelling and recognition and economic development for Aboriginal businesses is a significant opportunity for the Geelong region. We work closely with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and request that Traditional Owners hold a leadership position in any strategy.

84. Boost tourism infrastructure by allowing more national parks to grant long leases

Attract investment in Victoria's regional tourism industry by immediately allowing more national parks to grant leases for up to 49 years for infrastructure proposals that meet specific criteria and complement environmental and heritage values.

The Committee for Geelong has no specific comment related to this recommendation.



4.3 Connect the regions to help strengthen wellbeing

85. Reform regional public transport to meet local needs

In the next five years, gradually redirect some regional transport funding to redesigned, integrated local transport services, based on regional needs assessments, and incorporating flexible services that meet local needs.

The Committee for Geelong strongly supports this recommendation. Working with local stakeholders, we have been calling for an integrated transport plan for the G21 region. Please refer to the attached submission for more detail.

<https://committeeforgeelong.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/201218-Principal-Freight-Network-submission-Committee-for-Geelong-18DEC2020.pdf>

The Committee for Geelong also travelled to China in late 2019, with URBIS and Deakin University to explore the new trackless trams technology. Please refer to a media release which provides an overview of our interest in Geelong being a place for pilots and innovation. ['Trackless trams' potential pilot for Geelong - Committee for Geelong.](#)

The Committee for Geelong also made a submission to the City of Greater Geelong's Transport Network Operating Plan in early 2020. [Committee-for-Geelong-Transport-Network-Operating-Plan-submission-COGG-2-Jan-2020-FINAL.pdf](#)

We wish to specific highlight the following for consideration in Recommendation 85:

In the Geelong community's Clever and Creative vision, there is an aspiration for A Fast, Reliable and Connected Transport Network. Within that aspiration there is a measure of success that outlines a future where 50 per cent of journeys to work are made by public transport, walking or cycling.

Apart from short walking and cycling trips, public transport is the key alternate transport option to private vehicle use into the Central Geelong area. Beyond rail and regional ferry services, all public transport within Geelong shares the road network which highlights the lower order priority that public transport plays in our road networks.

According to the data outlined in the draft Transport Network Operating Plan, all people who travel to work to Central Geelong from a four to six kilometre radius, 92 percent travel by car with five percent choosing to use public transport (three percent cycle to work). This clearly shows there is a considerable public transport challenge facing us.

Public transport provides the greatest opportunity to promote mode shift away from private vehicle use. It needs and must have a high order priority within Council's medium and long-term planning.

Public transport is a significant consideration of Geelong's future as we grow to 500,000 people in the next 20 years. The Committee for Geelong made a submission to the TNOP (link above to complete submission) with some recommendations including:



- The need to align with the Accessible and Inclusive Geelong Feasibility Study and recognise that walking and cycling is often not an option for people with a disability and that public transport that is accessible and inclusive is often the only option.
- That public transport options and the consideration of new technology – for example trackless trams – be included at the forefront in ongoing dialogue with the Victorian Government’s Department of Transport.
- Priority routes and transit lanes for public transport that supports the cycling and pedestrian priority routes within the Central Geelong area that offers flexibility and creativity, acknowledging the evolving nature of public and sustainable transport.

86. Improve resilience of regional telecommunications infrastructure

In the next 10 years, develop more resilient regional telecommunications infrastructure so communities can stay safe during emergencies, including greater network redundancy and back-up power supply. Continue co-funding mobile black spot projects with industry and the Australian Government.

The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation and has discussed the need with Telstra and NBNCo for broadband access to be considered as part of the Universal Service Obligation to ensure ubiquitous broadband access to all Australians.

87. Fund regional libraries to provide better internet access

Immediately provide funding for regional and rural libraries to improve community access to fast, free internet services, leveraging existing library infrastructure.

The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation in principle. In a COVID-normal environment there is and will be an increasing need for community spaces to be places of learning and work.

88. Use rural schools for children's specialist and allied telehealth services

Retrofit or better use selected rural school infrastructure for children's specialist and allied telehealth services to improve children's health and development. Immediately begin with a trial in Wimmera Southern Mallee.

In a COVID-normal world, the Committee for Geelong sees the opportunity for more permanent funding streams and usage of telehealth as an important part of supporting our regional and rural community's health and wellbeing. This need is strongly aligned to our comments in Recommendations 86 and 87.



4.4 Foster regional Victorians' health, safety and inclusion

89. Deliver multipurpose shared social service facilities in the regions

Immediately undertake collaborative inter-agency planning for regional social services to identify opportunities for multipurpose shared facilities, then deliver them where appropriate in partnership with local governments and community organisations.

- *The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation with some relevant research and commentary available in Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf](#) (committeeforgeelong.com.au). We specifically draw attention to this section on p.63:*

Opportunities for Geelong:

- *The City of Greater Geelong currently has several co-working spaces. Their offerings range from basic hot-desk rental and meeting room hire, to workshops, networking events, rehearsal and exhibition spaces, event management, professional development, and business coaching. Building the capacity of these existing facilities to foster local networks, share knowledge, and expand their range of offerings could help build a stronger local economy and more resilient workforce. They could also potentially partner with employers and online education experts to co-deliver training and upskilling for remote employees across the region.*
- *Co-working spaces could be better integrated into existing and new neighbourhood centres, broadening their role beyond retail and service centres to employment hubs as part of a 10-15 minute neighbourhood policy.*
- *There is also the opportunity to better support working from home, with technology and training, which in turn could facilitate further in-migration from Melbourne in the aftermath of COVID-19.*

Also on p.65:

Opportunities for Geelong:

- *Co-working spaces play a key role in the Tulsa Remote program. These facilities can help in attracting and retaining remote workers, building community, and supporting local businesses. There is potential to create partnerships with larger businesses through sponsorship, events and workshops, or cultural programming to help transform co-working spaces into attractive, dynamic community hubs across the region.*
- *A well-designed campaign to attract workers, visitors, and perhaps businesses to the region presents one option. A project of this type could be delivered in collaboration with Traditional Owners, neighbouring municipalities, regional tourism bodies, and the local chamber of commerce. The Lille Metropole agency, profiled in the following section, might provide a useful model.*



- *Companies will be looking to decentralise and diversify. A number of large companies are now considering moving away from the CBDs and closer to employees' homes. More businesses will establish hub or satellite offices in different locations to allow employees to work closer to home, with affordable land, skilled workforce, secure parking and transport links to the CBD and metropolis for meetings. This presents real opportunities for Geelong and its suburban hubs as business locations.*

90. Support regional councils to update, repurpose or retire outdated community infrastructure

Fund regional councils in the next five years to update, repurpose or retire outdated community infrastructure for better service delivery.

The Committee for Geelong supports the City of Greater Geelong's advocacy for the proposed Northern ARC Health & Wellbeing Hub at Norlane. This hub will deliver state-of-the-art aquatic and fitness facilities along with health and community facilities, with a focus on preventative health and wellbeing complementing Barwon Health North that is situated on the same site. It would provide long overdue health infrastructure to a growing area and would generate \$111 million in preventative health benefits to the community over 10 years. The Vital Communities program includes initiatives to improve the prosperity of communities in Corio, Norlane and Whittington.

The program aims to increase the liveability of these suburbs by improving five areas of activity education, employment, housing, neighbourhood liveability and health and wellbeing.

This initiative is supported via the Geelong COVID Recovery Collective formed in 2020 with priorities listed here: [Geelong-COVID-Recovery-Collective-Priorities-26JUNE2020-FINAL.pdf](#) (committeeforgeelong.com.au)

91. Create climate-adapted facilities for rural communities

In the next five years, fund local governments to plan and help deliver a network of designated, accessible climate-adapted community facilities, to manage the health impacts of extreme heat and bushfire smoke.

The Committee for Geelong in principle supports this recommendation. Business leaders and governments across the world agree that taking action to protect the environment is key to our economic recovery. "Climate action can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance social equity, through the use of new technologies and the creation of new industries and new jobs" (Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force, C40 Cities, 2020). A recent Australian report by Ernst and Young found that a renewables-led economic recovery will create almost three times as many jobs as a fossil-fuel-led recovery (Slezak, 2020).



In Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](#), the Green Recovery & Sustainability section outlines international and national evidence to support the need for more focused and committed action (pp.74-77). This includes a range of recommendations for the Geelong region:

- *Adopt the ‘live locally’ principles of 10-15 minute neighbourhoods to inform other urban planning decisions for existing areas of Greater Geelong to ensure a more connected and sustainable city.*
- *Deliver active transportation, greener and more sustainable environments (with employment, education, health, recreation and other services all located in localised, walkable and active transportation hubs or High Streets) in Armstrong Creek and the Northern and Western Growth Areas.*
- *Seize the opportunity to build a better, greener economy for the future, explore the possibility of Geelong becoming a site for the Beyond Zero Emissions Million Jobs project.*

The City of Greater Geelong recently endorsed its new Sustainability Framework Action Plan (2020-22). Geelong stakeholders and community have a significant opportunity to collaborate and create a greener and more sustainable future to support Council’s Action Plan that includes the need to “renew and implement the City’s Zero Carbon Emission Strategy to inform the Climate Change Response Plan and prepare a roadmap for the region to become zero-carbon by 2047.” This is no small task, but we have the opportunity, need and willingness to transform our economy for the long term.

The Committee for Geelong also sees an opportunity for the significant Victorian Government investment in Social Housing in our region to incorporate ‘green’ principles in the design and construction. This will fuel job creation in sustainable construction and ensure a far better outcome for our community as we work towards a zero-carbon future.

92. Build regional residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation facilities

Within five years, build residential detoxification and rehabilitation facilities in regional Victoria to provide equitable access to alcohol and other drug treatment.

The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation in principle and would refer to our member organisations Barwon Health and the Western Victoria Primary Health Network for more detailed advice.



93. Fund more Youth Foyers in regional Victoria

Fund more Youth Foyers in regional Victoria, beginning with Geelong, Wodonga and Bendigo by 2026, to build on existing education infrastructure and support vulnerable young people.

The Committee for Geelong fully supports this recommendation. We are working closely with local stakeholders to meet the need of our young people and particularly support the development of a Youth Hub in central Geelong. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected young people and their mental health and we need a holistic, strategic response.

94. Expand social housing in regional centres, in locations with good access

Focus social housing investments in regional centres, near access to transport and services, to contribute to a target of 4.5% social housing dwellings for every 100 Victorian households by 2031.

The Committee for Geelong supports this recommendation and refers you to Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](#) and specifically to p.80:

Opportunities for Geelong:

- The recently commissioned and endorsed Social Housing Policy for the City of Greater Geelong has now been initiated, with a target of 100 new units to be built over 2020. This is a major positive step, but the need, in the order of 7,000 units per annum, is far greater than the commitment. There is an opportunity to extend this initial commitment as part of a post-COVID-19 employment and social justice package and to build more social housing in collaboration with private developers as they open up land in Armstrong Creek and the Northern and Western Growth Areas.*
- Samaritan House Geelong in partnership with Formflow and Deakin University, has developed a prototype, prefabricated, one-bedroom unit called Prefab21. These independent living units are being established in the suburb of Moolap as transitional accommodation for men who experience homelessness. This model could be expanded to partially address the shortfall in social housing in the City of Greater Geelong.*

95. Make social housing suitable for changing local climates

Prioritising northern Victoria, immediately begin a long-term program of modifying social housing to be climate resilient by improving the energy efficiency and energy affordability of residences.

The Committee for Geelong agrees with this recommendation. Please refer to our commentary in Recommendation 91.



Key recommendations for Infrastructure Victoria that require inclusion in the 30 Year Draft Strategy.

The Committee for Geelong shared our concerns that the creative sector was not referred to in the draft Strategy. In the first instance, the Committee for Geelong supports Victorian Government investment in the extension of the Geelong Gallery. More information regarding the business case for investment will be available via the Geelong Gallery.

An overview of the Creative Industries in the region is outlined on p.37 of Resilient Geelong: Reasons for Success and Challenges for a post-COVID-19 Future. [Johnson-et-al.-Resilient-Geelong-Research-Paper.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](http://www.committeeforgeelong.com.au). Further in the research report, there is a section on pp.83-85, which provides an analysis of the current environment for creative industries and references case studies and examples of what can be done to support this sector. In summary, please see below the specific opportunities suggested for the Geelong region:

Opportunities for Geelong:

A rise in commercial vacancies resulting from COVID-19 could present an opportunity to seek further Victorian Government and Greater Geelong funding to revive vacant spaces program similar to Renew Geelong program for local start-ups and creatives. There is scope to connect this agenda to the Vacant Geelong Project as one means of activating currently unused industrial and retail spaces. It could be overseen by local not for profit organisation Creative Geelong Inc, following the model of Renew Newcastle, which has already been utilised in Geelong.

The Geelong arts community, in particular the Geelong Arts Centre, Geelong Art Gallery, Back to Back Theatre and Creative Geelong, have all been active in moving their offerings online and making adjustments in response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. Many of these activities broadened their geographical and social reach, although they also suffered from mass cancellations and the loss of box office returns. The challenge remains: how to monetise these offerings, build points of difference and leverage the UNESCO designation as a Creative City of Design?

Finally, while not available at the time of this submission, the Committee for Geelong is chairing a Project Steering Committee that has been funded to deliver a Creative Industries Strategy for the G21 Region. Please see a link to a media release providing an overview of this piece of work. [Creative sector plan set to inform post-COVID future - Committee for Geelong](#)

It is estimated that this strategy will be finalised in April, May 2021. If you have any questions or wish to have a more detailed briefing on this work and it's potential to inform Infrastructure Victoria please contact Jennifer Cromarty, CEO of the Committee for Geelong on: jennifer.cromarty@committeeforgeelong.com.au



Finally, the Committee for Geelong has long advocated for a 'Plan Geelong'. Please refer to our submissions to the City of Greater Geelong's Draft Settlement Strategy and C395 Planning Scheme Amendment. [190729-Committee-for-Geelong-submission-Amendment-C395-Settlement-Strategy-For-Web-with-Attachment2020-2.pdf](#) and our verbal presentation to the Independent Planning Panel here: [C395-Panel-Submission-12FEB2020-FINAL.pdf \(committeeforgeelong.com.au\)](#)

In general, the Committee for Geelong would like to share the following:

The Commission of Inquiry in the City of Greater Geelong made several findings – and those outlined on page 13 of the Inquiry report [Geelong-City-Council-Report.pdf \(localgovernment.vic.gov.au\)](#), include:

- *Urgent priority be given to the development of a 20 to 30-year outcome focused vision and strategy for the Council and the City developed in consultation with key business, community and other stakeholders ("Clever and Creative Vision has been completed); and*
- *The long-term vision and strategy to guide Council's approach to investment in and advocacy for the economic development, population growth, environmental sustainability and community services of Greater Geelong. Subsequent development of long-term capital investment, business and advocacy plans to guide the Council's work for the City will be essential.*

The Committee for Geelong has long advocated for a 'Plan Geelong'. Our history of research and policy development includes the Winning from Second report published in 2016, and late last year the Australia's Gateways to Growth report – a collaboration between the City of Greater Geelong, the City of Newcastle and the Wollongong City Council. This work will take the opportunity of these Gateway Cities to the Federal sphere – with discussions already occurring with the newly formed Centre for Population created by Minister for Cities, Population and Urban Infrastructure.

In essence, Geelong does and will play a significant role in easing the population pressures of Melbourne whilst maintaining liveability, affordability and accessibility – but only if the planning is long term, strategic and supported by all levels of government. Until this work is agreed and completed – it is very difficult to align other significant planning work conducted by the City of Greater Geelong eg the Settlement Strategy or the 10 year Transport Network Operating Plan in isolation.



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Many thanks for the chance to make this submission. The Committee for Geelong would welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement and to answer any questions you may have with respect to this submission.

Please feel free to contact me via jennifer.cromarty@committeeforgeelong.com.au or contact my office direct on 035227 8075.

Kind regards

Jennifer Cromarty

CEO, Committee for Geelong