

# MELBOURNE 2030 IMPLEMENTATION REFERENCE GROUP: PRIORITY IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the Government with recommendations from the Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group on priority issues for the successful implementation of Melbourne 2030.

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group was established in mid 2003 to provide the government with independent advice on implementing Melbourne 2030. The Group includes representatives from seventeen peak bodies and key stakeholder groups. (See appendix 1 for a full membership list).

The members of the Implementation Reference Group are appointed by the Minister as individuals nominated by their respective organisations. Therefore, the views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the formal views of all organisations.

The Reference Group has identified twelve priority issues that are critical to the successful implementation of Melbourne 2030:

- Ensuring there is whole of government and bipartisan support for *Melbourne 2030*
- Getting community and stakeholder buy-in to Melbourne 2030
- Resourcing local government and defining responsibilities
- Managing outward growth and green wedges
- Significant investment in public transport is required
- Integrating and managing infrastructure provision
- Facilitating investment and development in activity centres
- Ensuring high quality residential development
- Increasing the supply of well located affordable housing and ensuring housing affordability
- Building more equitable, stronger, healthier and safer communities
- Moving towards more environmentally sustainable design and development
- Improving planning decision making processes

This report details the critical issues and priority actions identified by the Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group in relation to each of the twelve priority issues. It must be appreciated that these issues have no order of priority, and are not to be seen as the only issues the Implementation Reference Group considers are important. Together though, they are considered the most crucial next steps towards successful implementation of Melbourne 2030.

Appendix 2 includes detailed notes from Implementation Reference Group workshops held to discuss the priority issues and feedback provided before and after the workshops. Not all of issues identified in appendix 2 are detailed in the main text of each priority issue and the focus of the main text is to highlight the key issues that need to be addressed and recommended actions.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group wishes to reiterate its support for the strategic, metropolitan wide policy framework that is provided by Melbourne 2030. We also recognise the Government's work to date in putting Melbourne 2030 into practice by legislating to protect the green wedges, providing initial resources for local government through the Local Government Assistance Fund, establishing the Committees for Smart Growth, setting up the Regional Housing Working Groups and providing Structure Planning Advice for local government.

However, five issues have emerged that need to be addressed immediately otherwise we believe there is a risk to successful implementation of Melbourne 2030.

1. Achieving a substantial mode share shift to public transport is critical if Melbourne 2030's objectives are to be realised and Melbourne's economic competitiveness maintained. However, despite the government's efforts to date, stakeholders currently do not have confidence that the transport elements of Melbourne 2030 (which includes the perception and reality around safety concerns) will be adequately delivered or addressed. Unless more is done, the government's 20% by 2020 public transport target is unlikely to be achieved.
2. The Government needs to ensure agency commitment, including funding, for implementation across the whole of government to demonstrate that all government departments and bureaucrats are taking implementation seriously. At present, stakeholders are not convinced that this is the case. The Government must also provide ongoing resources for local government implementation of Melbourne 2030.
3. Strong political leadership in relation to Melbourne 2030 is needed across the whole of Government. All Ministers need to be clearly communicating Melbourne 2030's messages when discussing relevant projects and initiatives. This whole of government approach needs to be driven by the Secretaries of all government departments.
4. There is an urgent need to get action happening on the ground through demonstration and pilot projects. It is imperative that examples of successful implementation and positive outcomes are provided to the community and stakeholders in the short term.
5. All Melbourne 2030 implementation activities need to be underpinned by a major and well-resourced marketing campaign to clearly explain Melbourne 2030.

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 1 - ENSURING THERE IS WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT AND BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR MELBOURNE 2030**

Maintaining state government commitment to implementing Melbourne 2030 in a coordinated, consistent and holistic manner is critical. In particular, Melbourne 2030 should be used as a reference point across government when planning infrastructure, transport or services for the city region.

Strong state government leadership is needed, combined with an inclusive approach to working with all levels of government. A critical and inherently difficult challenge will be to ensure that government and agency actions and decisions are consistent with Melbourne 2030. To facilitate this, a new culture of collaboration between government departments and agencies is needed. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of a Melbourne 2030 delivery body or statutory authority to demonstrate commitment and provide implementation powers.

Efforts should be made to secure bipartisan support for the fundamental aspects of the strategy, and wherever possible, a win/win approach to dealings with the Opposition and minor parties should be pursued. However, it is acknowledged that it will be difficult to secure complete support for a strategy as comprehensive and complex as Melbourne 2030

The provision of adequate funding from Treasury for implementation on an ongoing basis is critical, including increased funding for local government, public transport and ongoing communication activities. It is particularly critical that Melbourne 2030's objectives are linked to State budget processes.

Demonstrable and tangible outcomes are needed to ensure ongoing momentum for implementation. In particular, demonstration and pilot projects are essential to build support for the Strategy. The state government will also need to bring together key stakeholders to review implementation outcomes on an ongoing basis.

Local government needs to ensure that their planning policies, services and investment activities are aligned with Melbourne 2030. Local government is uniquely placed to adapt Melbourne 2030's metropolitan wide framework and principles to the local level and to work through issues with their communities. This does depend however on local governments communicating Melbourne 2030's policies in a constructive manner. A key challenge for local government will be managing the interface between areas undergoing change and existing neighbourhoods. To support this, the State Government will need to demonstrate that local flexibility in implementation is achievable. This consistency will also need to be supported and reinforced at VCAT, whereby decisions by the Tribunal make a holistic and positive contribution towards the objectives of Melbourne 2030 in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner.

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group will continue to emphasise the importance of strong state government leadership and interdepartmental/agency cooperation and collaboration. We will also seek to utilise community and industry levers to encourage behavioural and attitudinal changes. Consistency with the objectives of Melbourne 2030 will be monitored, both in terms of the decisions made by government, but also in terms of the recommendations made by our Group.

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### **Priority Actions**

- Undertake a significant marketing campaign to explain and promote Melbourne 2030 to the broader community and stakeholders.
- Provide resources and support for Melbourne 2030 demonstration and pilot projects.
- Demonstrate that there will be adequate funding available for ongoing implementation in coming years.
- Emphasise a culture of collaboration between government departments and agencies in implementation of Melbourne 2030.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 2 - GETTING COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN TO MELBOURNE 2030**

The Reference Group believes that Government needs to urgently increase efforts to more effectively communicate the underlying rationale of Melbourne 2030. It is of critical importance that people and organisations are aware of and understand the reasons for the strategy, what it is seeking to achieve and why these objectives will benefit Victorians now and in the future.

Community resistance to change is an important and legitimate challenge that needs to be considered and addressed. Communities need to be convinced of the broader community benefits to be gained from Melbourne 2030. Local communities also need to understand what aspects of the strategy are ‘not negotiable’, but also be convinced that local priorities will be respected as Melbourne 2030 is implemented at the local level. Lack of community understanding about Melbourne 2030 and the planning system more broadly must also be addressed. The government needs to build confidence in the planning system and demonstrate that the system is fair and the underlying principles and objectives of Better Decisions Faster will help. The government must also ensure that decision-makers give sufficient weight to Melbourne 2030.

A communications strategy for the whole of government, based on research, is needed to ensure that promotional measures are not ad hoc or lacking integration. The primacy of Melbourne 2030 should also be reinforced in any associated public announcements or consultation processes, with all government projects that are delivering on Melbourne 2030 “badged” accordingly. Ministers and Departments across Government must be seen to be promoting and working with the strategy. However, before commencing a communications strategy, it is imperative that state government funding to deliver on projects is guaranteed.

It will be important to use the media to communicate Melbourne 2030’s vision, especially the fact that it is much more than just a planning document. There is a need to excite the community, encourage debate and use messages that are relevant to people’s lives. The most effective messages to communicate the strategy should be developed based on research. Wherever possible, communications should highlight the benefits individuals, local communities, interest groups or investors will derive from particular aspects of Melbourne 2030, whilst encouraging ongoing debate and discussion in relation to the individual and social changes that are needed.

The government must also commit to genuine engagement and not just marketing. Resources need to be provided for awareness raising and consultation processes associated with Melbourne 2030’s implementation. This includes support for local governments to engage with their communities and educate them about Melbourne 2030. The State Government should utilise local municipal meetings (in partnership with local government) to continue to reinforce the basics behind the strategy and explain what will happen if Melbourne 2030 isn’t implemented. Such meetings could be followed by local visioning (with clarity provided about what is and isn’t negotiable). There is a particular need to build understanding and engage with communities in outer areas and green wedges in relation to the strategy’s implications for these areas.

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The government should also work closely with universities in undergraduate and post-graduate planning courses and professional associations to build knowledge of and support for Melbourne 2030 amongst planning professionals. Special events such as Planning Week should be used to build the Strategy's profile and foster continued informed and inclusive debate on the objectives of Melbourne 2030.

Concerns about higher density development in existing areas will remain a key area of community concern. The importance of avoiding further urban sprawl should be emphasised, together with the role that Melbourne 2030 will play in balancing the consolidation of activity centres with the protection of important neighbourhood character in other areas. There is a need to clearly communicate what will be unaffected and what will change as a result of Melbourne 2030 and how any increase in density will be effectively managed to foster social, economic and environmental benefits and guard against any threats to livability, for example with regard to increased traffic congestion and loss of vegetation.

Promoting good design and better community outcomes will also be important to overcoming community concerns about additional housing and higher densities in established areas. Place-making initiatives like the Transit Cities program will assist in building community support but will need to be supported by qualitative improvements to urban design context and services such as public transport.

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group will have an important role to play in assisting stakeholder and community understanding of Melbourne 2030. We are committed to publicly and pro-actively advocating the changes that are required to ensure Melbourne develops in a sustainable and positive way. We also have an important role to play in advising on key messages that need to be communicated and in assisting with the design and structuring of educative and consultative processes. We can also play a key role in providing information to the members of our organisations. To support our role, we need synthesised feedback from consultation that is undertaken.

### **Priority Actions**

- Prepare and implement a better resourced and more clearly targeted Melbourne 2030 communications strategy and evaluate outcomes of implementation.
- Ensure government projects that are delivering on Melbourne 2030 across government departments and agencies are "badged" accordingly.
- Provide resources for Melbourne 2030 awareness raising and consultation processes, including resources for local governments to engage with their communities.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 3 – RESOURCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND DEFINING RESPONSIBILITIES**

The successful implementation of Melbourne 2030 will rely on state government providing support and funding for local government. The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group recognises the funding the government has provided for local government to date through the Local Government Assistance Fund. However, it is critically important that the state government continues to provide resources for the local government assistance fund over the next few critical years of implementation. This funding must be provided at least until critical strategic planning work is complete. The government must also provide ongoing funding for key Melbourne 2030 initiatives, including the development AND implementation of activity centre structure plans, and development of regional and local housing strategies. The outcomes from the additional resources provided to local government should be monitored and evaluated to ensure they are best targeted. The Reference Group recognises that local government will also need to allocate some of its own resources to implementation.

In addition to the critical need to fund strategic planning work, the Government must resource local government to communicate and engage with their communities in relation to Melbourne 2030. Local government will have a key role to play in keeping local communities informed and engaged in ongoing and inclusive debate about the best ways to proceed towards successful implementation. Communities need to be continually reminded of the basic principles of the strategy and their inherent good sense. In doing so, broader planning issues (such as the ageing population, changing work trends and urban consolidation) must be given a voice in local planning debates. State government should assist local governments to engage with communities, including the development of new tools or methodologies for consultation and engagement.

The sheer number of local governments involved in implementation and their individual characteristics also present a challenge for state government coordination. There is also a lack of ownership of Melbourne 2030 amongst some parts of local government due to concern about local political issues, such as community opposition to higher densities. However, the general support for Melbourne 2030's principles by most local governments and peak bodies presents a significant opportunity to build effective partnerships.

There is, however, the need to clearly define and allocate responsibility for implementation and there needs to be recognition that this will require some trade-offs. The government should give consideration to working with particular local governments to identify whether there are opportunities to consider areas to be managed with a local government priority and allocating some areas for regional or metropolitan management.

State government must continue to work with and maintain an open dialogue with local government. There is also a need for innovative thinking in relation to providing in kind support for councils. Consideration should be given to: regular Melbourne 2030 regional/state/local forums; tracking of councils progress by DSE; promotion of better work practices such as pre-lodgement certification; and greater access to local/regional metropolitan research data.

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The Implementation Reference Group supports the underlying principles and objectives of Better Decisions Faster. The Government should implement actions to deliver on these principles and objectives as soon as possible, taking into account submissions made by stakeholders. A “policy” desk to provide definitive advice and responses to policy questions from local government at the regional level is needed in the short term, together with quick resolution of planning anomalies. In turn, local government must ensure that strategic planning, based on the principles and objectives of Melbourne 2030, is carried out and monitored.

A significant issue that will need to be addressed by local government in partnership with state government is the lack of qualified and experienced staff available to work within local government, high staff turnover and loss of collective knowledge. Initiatives to build the planning workforce need to be implemented. Local governments also need to do more in relation to training and retaining staff.

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group will have an important role to play in emphasising the importance of a partnership approach and involving stakeholders in implementation. We can also assist in the monitoring of local government’s progress with implementation.

### **Priority Actions**

- Provide funding for an ongoing local government assistance fund.
- Implement the principles and objectives of Better Decisions Faster (BDF), with changes to the Planning & Environment Act during the Spring 2004 session of parliament.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUE 4 – MANAGING OUTWARD GROWTH AND GREEN WEDGES

A key challenge for government will be managing the inherent tensions between maintaining an adequate supply of land, managing outward growth and protecting green wedges. However it is critical that each of these imperatives are addressed and managed.

In particular, the Urban Development Program and the Committees for Smart Growth should be used to deliver improved land availability through better monitoring and awareness of supply and better coordination of land release. Through the Committees for Smart Growth, the government must provide certainty in relation to the future development of growth areas, including the direction and extent of future urban development and the broad form and function of land use within each growth area. Issues relating to current low density patterns of development in fringe urban areas also need to be considered through growth area planning, including difficulties in providing viable and good standards of public transport, higher car ownership, and larger distances that need to be travelled in order to access services and facilities.

In addition to managing land supply and sequencing within growth areas, the government must also ensure that growth areas are managed to deliver better coordination of infrastructure and services. The Government must also give further consideration to management of land outside the Urban Growth Boundary and in the regional corridors of the networked cities. The Government also needs to ensure that planning addresses the particular issues associated with transition from urban to non urban areas on both sides of the Urban Growth Boundary (including consideration of the role of buffer zones). This should be addressed as part of the Committees for Smart Growth process. It will be important to ensure that the management of such 'transition' issues does not impose additional costs on primary producers.

In relation to green wedges, it is imperative that the government provides adequate resources for the preparation and implementation of Green Wedge Management Plans. In particular, farmers should be engaged in discussions about the future of green wedges and development of Green Wedge Management Plans as primary stakeholders (as well as other interested parties). Local governments should also be resourced to engage with their communities, especially in fringe and interface areas to implement green wedge policies and initiatives. Incentive structures for farmers in green wedges (eg. rate relief, ensuring right to farm, weed & vermin control activities) should be considered. Local government should also ensure that planning processes flow smoothly for legitimate agricultural development applications.

Overall, there is a need for targeted promotion and education of the sectors of the community that do not understand the need to better manage outward growth and protect green wedges. The government should seek to capitalise on community support for environmental and sustainability issues in the promotion of the Urban Growth Boundary and protection of green wedges.

The community also needs to be convinced that for the activity centres policy to be successful, the urban growth boundary must be maintained. Although some may question why green wedges should be maintained when there is a need for significant change in other areas, the primacy of the environmental imperatives for green wedge protection should be emphasised. Greater community recognition is also needed of the importance and value of agriculture.

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### **Priority Actions**

- Ensure an adequate supply of land through the Urban Development Program and the Committees for Smart Growth.
- Resource development and implementation of Green Wedge Management Plans, to be provide a positive future for green wedge land.
- Resource targeted promotion and education for the sectors of the community that do not understand the need to manage outward growth and green wedges.
- Provide guidance to clarify the transition from urban to non urban areas on both sides of the Urban Growth Boundary, including consideration of the role of buffer zones.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 5 – SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS REQUIRED**

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group believe that achieving a substantial mode share shift to public transport is critical if Melbourne 2030's objectives are to be realised. However, despite the government's efforts to date, stakeholders currently do not have confidence that the transport elements of Melbourne 2030 will be adequately delivered. Unless more is done, the government's 20% by 2020 public transport target will not be achieved. This is potentially a critical threat to the success of the strategy.

State and federal government commitment to fund essential transport infrastructure is needed. This should include state and federal government funding for public transport infrastructure (as an equally important complement to road funding) to overcome existing backlogs, as well as provision of new infrastructure in growth areas. The significant economic, social and environmental consequences of under-investment must be acknowledged and addressed. However, the state government should not make its transport commitments conditional on federal government funding, otherwise there will be a high level of scepticism that it is serious about implementation. Funding alternatives should also be considered (see priority issue 6 for more discussion of this issue).

At the state government level, a substantial allocation of funding for improvements to the public transport system must be provided if the government's public transport targets are to be realised. This increased funding for public transport needs to be recognised as a strategic investment in the future effectiveness of the State's overall transport system. In particular, significant improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of public transport must be implemented. An improved and integrated bus network to cater for an increase in cross town commuter demand and to service the network of activity centres must be provided. Improved accessibility to public transport must also be provided, including improved disability access and measures to improve access and usage amongst older adults, in light of the aging population.

Overall, more detail is needed on the transport components of Melbourne 2030 and this should be provided in the form of an integrated transport plan, including specific elements aimed at encouraging more walking, cycling and public transport usage, with appropriate funding identified for implementation and delivery. The integrated transport plan should also include measures to manage travel demand, make best use of road infrastructure and manage traffic congestion in inner areas. (See priority issue 6 for more discussion of this issue).

Although the Reference Group recognises the government's work to date in improving safety, there is a need for a new partnership between state government, local government, transport operators and police to visibly improve safety and perceptions of safety on and around public transport.

The government should also resource initiatives to encourage cultural change in relation to travel behaviour. Major change in the travel patterns of commuters and other road users will be required to meet the ambitious target of increasing patronage from the present level of 9% to 20% by 2020. In particular, the government must build greater community understanding of the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits of all modes. The government should also continue with pedestrian safety initiatives (such as reduced local traffic speeds and further speed limit reductions around schools) and educate the community about how the current

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and proposed transport system is useable and can fulfil travel needs, together with the physical and mental health benefits of walking and cycling. However, there is also a need for community recognition that public transport needs to be combined with road transport to achieve optimum outcomes.

The state government should engage local government as a partner in planning and developing services, encouraging patronage and measuring performance. Local governments should be encouraged to adopt innovative approaches to meeting community transport needs, for example free minibuses to service local communities. Local governments should also ensure continuity of transport linkages in new developments as they are staged.

### **Priority Actions**

- Provide a substantial increase in the allocation of state government funding for improvements to the public transport system to ensure targets can be met.
- Release an integrated transport plan with guaranteed funding for implementation and delivery.
- Resource initiatives to encourage cultural change in relation to travel behaviour.
- Develop a new partnership between state government, local government, police and transport operators to visibly improve safety and perceptions of safety on and around public transport.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUE 6 – INTEGRATING AND MANAGING INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

The government must provide a clear vision of what infrastructure is required and prepare an implementation plan which addresses both physical and social infrastructure.

Insufficient funds for infrastructure asset renewal and replacement are creating a very real medium to long term issue for the community. The government must allocate funds for renewal of aging infrastructure, especially stormwater, sewers and roads. In particular, stormwater capacity needs to be addressed as a priority issue in areas which are undergoing increases in density levels. The backlog of physical, transport and social infrastructure needs (especially roads) in outer metropolitan areas must also be addressed.

Alternative sources of funding for physical, social and transport infrastructure need to be investigated. Potential sources of funding include user charges, contributions, general and hypothecated taxes and bonds. The Reference Group note that the Property Council has released a report into Infrastructure Funding in Victoria that concludes that prudent State Government borrowing for infrastructure projects has the highest payback to the State.

A paradigm shift in relation to the provision of infrastructure is needed to ensure that public transport, roads, bridges and social infrastructure are provided early. A key task for the Committees for Smart Growth will be preparation of transport plans for the growth areas. It is critical that the Committees for Smart Growth are outcome focussed, not trend driven. The transport plans should include key milestones and staged implementation.

The government must also ensure that Urban Development Program directly influences agencies infrastructure planning and that a Melbourne 2030 consistency check is required for all infrastructure investments made across state government portfolios.

One of the most significant challenges to the commercial and economic performance (sustainability) of Melbourne over the next 2 decades is the forecast growth in the cost of commercial/freight transport. These freight costs, congestion, and associated impacts including deterioration in "service standards" (for mobility and access generally, and including the environmental/amenity aspects) are a significant challenge. This is a medium to long term risk to Melbourne's competitiveness with other Australian capital cities, if not addressed.

In addition to investing in public transport improvements (see priority 5) to reduce congestion, the Government needs to manage the road system to make the most of existing road infrastructure and to increase efficiency. An agreed strategy is needed to ensure that road space is used in the best possible way and congestion is reduced. In particular, the government must plan for freight growth, while recognising the needs of other road users (including on-road public transport). The increasing use of rail to handle freight is supported.

The Government also needs to implement initiatives to manage travel demand and should investigate pricing and reform of road user charges and taxes, including congestion pricing and public transport fares. The role of technology in resolving transport problems should also be investigated.

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Ongoing coordination between DOI and DSE is critical. In particular, it will be important to ensure that transport plans are prepared for major new developments, the Principal Public Transport Network is rolled out and progress measured, good working examples are promoted via facilitated projects, and infrastructure provision is coordinated with local government.

Greater community understanding is required in relation to the need to provide and manage infrastructure to accommodate projected growth. However the community also needs to realise that whilst service and network improvements can be made, substantial new road infrastructure in inner and middle suburbs is unlikely, and therefore significant effort must be directed to management of existing resources, especially arterial road space. Engagement should promote the real costs of transport choices and address community perceptions about public transport. The government should also invest in Intelligent Transport Systems to assist with information provision and travel demand management.

The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group will continue to emphasise the need for comprehensive infrastructure planning to guide government and private investment in both physical and social infrastructure. We will also emphasise the need to keep future options open (eg. in relation to technology, funding and pricing).

### **Priority Actions**

- Ensure the Urban Development Program informs and influences government agency infrastructure planning.
- Require a Melbourne 2030 consistency check for all state government infrastructure investments.
- Ensure that transport plans are prepared for major new developments and the Principal Public Transport Network is rolled out.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUE 7 – FACILITATING INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN ACTIVITY CENTRES

Private sector investment will make or break activity centre implementation. The private sector needs to be convinced of the value of investment in activity centres. Investment in activity centres needs to focus primarily on providing for the needs of the community in terms of retail and commercial floorspace, community facilities, urban design, safety, transport integration, jobs and services. Reflecting this, the Government should consider re-weighting performance criteria for activity centres towards investment facilitation and investment in employment and service provision.

Housing is also an important component of activity centre development and the government must address community concerns about medium or high density development within established areas. High quality and sensible development in appropriate areas will assist with this but will need to be defined and refined through ongoing community debate and promotion of best practice. The forthcoming 'Guidelines for Residential Developments 4 storeys or more' will need to serve as an effective implementation tool in achieving such outcomes.

The government must also address tensions between mixed uses, particularly entertainment venues, commercial interests and residents. Further research and policy direction in relation to this issue is needed.

To build community support for activity centre implementation, the government should emphasise the link between activity centre development, maintaining the Urban Growth Boundary and delivering the 20% public transport mode share by 2020 target. The government must also support councils and resource meetings with local residents to deal with their concerns relating to developments within their neighbourhoods. These meetings should emphasise the reasons why development is being directed to activity centres and the benefits activity centre development will have for local residents. Briefings for professional groups to educate them about activity centre implementation are also critical.

To ensure successful implementation of activity centre policy, the government must provide ongoing assistance for activity centre development, including: appropriate infrastructure investment up front; roll-out of the Principal Public Transport Network; provision of affordable land for development; and assistance with consultative processes. The government also needs to better understand the commercial and economic factors that will drive activity centre development by the private sector and pay particular attention to facilitating development in the middle and outer suburbs where there is less current market interest due to the lack of commercial viability.

The government also needs to develop new co-operative mechanisms and management models to assist in implementing activity centre objectives, together with criteria to help determine the most appropriate model(s) to use. In particular, the government must ensure that administrative arrangements for the management of activity centres are carefully considered and alternatives explored, as different centres will demand different approaches. Models may also need to change over time as centres develop. Management models should be determined through consultation with stakeholders.

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The government should also immediately establish and fund two demonstration projects in activity centres utilising a co-operative approach between state government and the specific local government. A five year time-frame should be adopted for delivering tangible results. Consideration should be given to substituting planning controls, using state government land and infrastructure funding as a means of supporting demonstration projects. Demonstration projects will also provide a valuable test for state and local government management systems.

The government should also identify where the best chances of success are and make those centres a priority for funding and other assistance. In particular, the government should review funding on an ongoing basis, and reward Councils who have supported or pushed for successful activity centre implementation. Consideration should also be given alongside demonstration projects to implementing stronger protection for areas surrounding activity centres.

The government must recognise the land area requirements of commercial, retail and community uses within activity centres. In particular, the government should clearly specify the role of VicUrban and give it specific tasks in the implementation of Melbourne 2030, which may include land assembly and consolidation in activity centres.

Unless there are long term strategic plans in place for activity centres, there will continue to be significant pressure for out of centre development. The government must also ensure that local government has appropriate statutory and strategic powers to control out-of-centre development proposals. In particular, the government must provide clear direction through the State Planning Policy Framework, a Ministerial Direction and a Planning Practice Note to prevent inappropriate out of centre retail, commercial and residential development, and to clarify the extent and area of activity centres.

The government also needs to recognise that it will be harder to justify high density residential development in outer suburban activity centres due to lower returns on investment. The government should examine options to promote development in these centres and should also work with industry to develop incentives for innovative design in middle and outer ring activity centres.

Local government will have a key role to play in ongoing activity centre implementation. State government must continue to work closely with local councils throughout activity centre implementation. In particular, it is important to ensure that structure plans for activity centres are progressed. Local government will also need to manage local consultation in relation to activity centres and work with residents, stakeholders and industry to achieve best practice in activity centre design, regulation and operation.

The government must measure success with activity centre implementation. Indicators of success could include: public and private investment; the number of activity centres where structure plans are being prepared or have been completed; new development occurring under new structure planning or Melbourne 2030 processes; increased residential densities being achieved; or new management models in place eg. VicUrban and Dandenong Development Board.

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The Melbourne 2030 Implementation Reference Group has established an Activity Centres Thematic Working Group. In the short term, the Activity Centres Thematic Working Group will: provide advice on obstacles to the implementation of the activity centre policy and potential priority centres; provide advice on the development of Performance Criteria for activity centres; and assist in increasing awareness and understanding of the activity centre policy. In the medium term, the Activity Centres Thematic Working Group will: engage with local government in two activity centre structure planning demonstration projects; and explore effective protocols for referral authorities. On an ongoing basis, the Activity Centres Thematic Working Group will provide feedback on any advice or guidelines prepared by the Department of Sustainability and Environment that relate to the implementation of the Melbourne 2030 activity centre policy. The government must ensure that the Activity Centres Thematic Working Group is adequately resourced to provide meaningful input into activity centre implementation.

### **Priority Actions**

- Ensure ongoing funding is provided for activity centre implementation, particularly the preparation AND implementation of structure plans.
- Provide ongoing assistance for activity centre development, including: appropriate infrastructure investment; roll-out of the Principal Public Transport Network; land assembly/consolidation; new management models; and assistance with consultative processes.
- Establish and fund two demonstration projects in activity centres utilising a co-operative approach between state government and the specific local government.
- Provide clear direction through the State Planning Policy Framework, a Ministerial Direction and a Planning Practice Note to prevent inappropriate out of centre retail, commercial and residential development, and to clarify the extent and area of activity centres.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUE 8 – ENSURING HIGH QUALITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

It is difficult to define ‘high quality’ residential development as it often requires a subjective assessment. Ultimately, provided a developer has complied with the requirements of the responsible planning authority, a development is assessed as being appropriate.

However, there is significant community concern that existing performance based planning schemes are not delivering good design outcomes. The government must include clear language and mandatory requirements in the Victoria Planning Provisions to provide greater certainty for communities, developers and residents. However, it is important to clearly distinguish between calls for more prescriptive design standards and calls for locational controls. More prescriptive controls over building form, siting and articulation are needed, whilst still allowing architects to create design excellence within the context of clear rules.

There is also concern that neighbourhood character is not being adequately recognised although it is also recognised that there are divergent understanding of what in fact neighbourhood character means in practice. To address this, the state government must provide a workable Practice Note on Neighbourhood Character amendments and urgently complete guidelines for development over four storeys. Ongoing state government monitoring of community satisfaction with design outcomes is also critical.

Communities will, however, need to accept that higher densities will occur in some areas throughout all municipalities. The state government must ensure that local governments are resourced to engage with their communities in relation to residential development. The government must also invest in education about medium and higher density housing to dispel myths.

Energy and water efficiency must be considered as an integral part of high quality development. The Commonwealth Games provides a unique opportunity to invest in the development of innovative housing materials, climate control and water efficiency systems as demonstration projects and as potential new manufacturing industries for Victoria.

### **Priority Actions**

- Complete the guidelines for development over four storeys.
- Provide a workable Practice Note on Neighbourhood Character amendments.
- Ensure local governments are resourced to engage with their communities in relation to residential development and the need to accommodate higher density development.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 9 – INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF WELL LOCATED AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND ENSURING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY**

Clear differentiation between affordable housing and housing affordability is needed. Affordable housing is defined in Melbourne 2030 as well-located housing, appropriate to the needs of a given household, where the cost (whether mortgage repayment or rent) is no more than 30 per cent of that household's income. Exceeding this level may result in 'housing stress', particularly in the lower 40 per cent of the income distribution scale. Social housing is a subset of affordable housing and is defined as non-profit housing owned and managed for the primary purpose of meeting social objectives such as affordable rents, responsible management, security of tenure and good location in relation to employment services. The term encompasses public housing and includes housing owned and managed by the community.

Affordability must also be seen in the context of not only upfront costs, but indirect or ongoing costs such as heating, cooling, transport and access to services or opportunities (ie. affordable living). Within this context, recognition should be given to the potential enhanced viability and significant cost savings to households from installation of more sustainable heating/cooling, lighting appliances, water storage/re-use facilities and design techniques such as insulation and strategic landscaping.

Housing affordability relates to the cost of purchasing a property through the private market and is impacted on by factors such as land prices and the cost of building.

### Affordable Housing

The Implementation Reference Group acknowledges the Government's work to date in implementing its Affordable Housing Strategy and delivering on its commitment to create more affordable housing options for low income Victorians. In particular, the Implementation Reference Group recognises the importance of a whole of government approach to affordable housing and enhancing affordable living for all Victorians, and emphasises the need for all agencies to make active links with the Affordable Housing Strategy for low income Victorians. The investigation of a full range of sustainable and accessible housing options is needed. Best practice examples internationally should be examined, and the models, processes and land use planning frameworks that are in place evaluated.

A viable approach to delivering affordable housing will need to include a strong role for the community housing sector in addition to direct public housing management by the Office of Housing. The Implementation Reference Group also recognises the important role VicUrban has to play in working with the Office of Housing, local government and community housing providers, but there is a need to clarify VicUrban's role in the provision of affordable housing as it is not clear to stakeholders. It is also critical that industry is brought on board and engaged in efforts to progress the affordable housing agenda.

The Implementation Reference Group commends the government's commitment in Melbourne 2030 to 'change the policy that governs the disposal of government land and buildings to reflect the best use rather than the highest price achievable, and base the policy on new socially responsible criteria'. The Government and relevant agencies must stop seeing land as an item to be sold to the highest bidder and instead see it as a strategic asset to be used to leverage other public benefit outcomes. The commitment in Melbourne 2030 to pursue best use rather than

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highest price policy in the disposal of surplus government land should be implemented as a priority.

Strategies to build understanding of the need for affordable housing provision across the metropolitan area are needed. The government should consider resourcing consultation processes to precede and accompany applications for social housing. The Government should also work with councils, through the Regional Housing Working Groups, to support them in their decision-making in relation to affordable housing.

### Housing Affordability

As discussed above, housing affordability relates to the cost of purchasing a property through the private market. The single most important factor influencing housing affordability is the cost of land and it is therefore imperative that land cost pressures are addressed.

The government's commitment to ensuring an adequate supply of land is available for development will help housing affordability. Increases in land prices, as a result of constrained supply is a major factor contributing to housing price increases. Adequate land supplies ensure a range of entities can compete in the market place and helps to deliver a greater variety of housing types on the ground.

Charges, taxes and other duties imposed on land and housing are currently being considered by the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into First Home Ownership. However, governments need to carefully assess the impact of all taxes, fees and charges and the affect they have on housing affordability. Such costs are regulated by state and local governments and include but are not limited to land tax, stamp duties, local laws and sustainability requirements.

While the Implementation Reference Group recognise the need for clear guidelines in relation to water and energy efficiency standards associated with housing development, it is important that the government carefully considers the cost of such measures and the impact on housing affordability. Government should also ensure that sufficient time is allowed for industry to modify its practices to limit the cost of introduction of such standards.

#### **Priority Actions**

- Ensure adequate land supply on an ongoing basis across the metropolitan region.
- Define VicUrban's role in the provision of affordable housing.
- Assess the impact of all taxes and charges affecting housing affordability.
- Pursue a whole of government approach to enhancing affordable living for all Victorians.
- Implement a best use rather than highest price policy for disposal of surplus government land.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 10 – BUILDING MORE EQUITABLE, HEALTHIER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES**

To progress this priority issue, the state government must ensure that infrastructure is provided in new estates in a timely manner and that the planning of new urban areas is designed to maximise walkability to key destinations such as schools, shops and community facilities. Safe, comfortable access to attractive pedestrian, bicycle and public transport networks should be a standard feature of all new urban areas. On the basis of advice from the National Heart Foundation and others, walkability is considered to mean no more than 400m or a five minute walk for an average adult, which roughly equates to a 10 minute walk for a slower pedestrian such as school-aged children or older adults.

More broadly, the state government needs to link and improve bicycle networks and increase the quality, ease of use and attractiveness of public transport throughout metropolitan Melbourne. The state government should review existing requirements for footpaths to ensure that they are wide enough for scooters and wheelchairs. Experience indicates this width needs to be no less than 1.5m in general residential areas and 2m along approach routes to schools, shops and other predictable destinations. The government should also introduce requirements for new homes and renovations to meet visitable standards to enhance access for the elderly and people with disabilities. Rather than seeing such a requirement as a potential additional cost, recognition should be given to seeing such design requirements as a necessary and sensible investment in the ongoing suitability of housing stock, given Melbourne's aging population.

State and local government should ensure adequate open space provision for active recreation. In existing areas, options to get maximum use from existing infrastructure and to promote community contact through casual use of shared space should be investigated. This should include consideration of options to address insurance and management issues so that community infrastructure such as schools can stay open on weekends and be used for recreational purposes. Local government should also consider better use of laneways as "safe zones" by providing lighting and seating to encourage their use as public spaces and encouraging residential renovations that offer natural surveillance of these areas.

Overall, urban design initiatives and more lighting should be used to promote improved perceptions of safety. There is also a need to examine options for better signage of community infrastructure. More shops, retail and community centres should be encouraged as part of or near railway stations. Initiatives to beautify railway stations (eg. "Adopt a station") should be considered.

Tensions between live music venues and local residents are threatening the cultural vitality of the inner city. The Implementation Reference Group acknowledges the work of the Live Music Taskforce which has provided a report and recommendations to government. While not wishing to pre-empt the outcome of this process, there is a clear need to use statutory planning processes to ensure win/win outcomes for live music venues and local residents. Consideration should be given to developing strategies to communicate to new residents in the inner city mixed use areas, or located close to commercial strips, about existing amenity and to working with venue owners to mitigate possible causes of tension or disturbance.

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### **Priority Actions**

- Ensure that infrastructure is provided to new estates in a timely manner and that the planning of fringe developments maximises access to pedestrian networks, public transport and bicycle networks.
- Explore options to address insurance and management issues so that schools can stay open on weekends and be used for recreational purposes.
- Develop appropriate regulatory framework, including noise attenuation and design responses to manage tensions between live music venue and local residents.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## **PRIORITY ISSUE 11 – MOVING TOWARDS MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

Many positive initiatives in relation to environmentally sustainable design and development are already underway. However, the government must ensure that implementation details are developed for all environmental policies contained in Melbourne 2030. In particular, control of weeds and vermin should be incorporated into Green Wedge Management Plans and funding provided for tree planting initiatives to address salinity and erosion on private and public land.

The government must also ensure that environmentally sustainable design (eg. water sensitive urban design, stormwater management and 3<sup>rd</sup> pipe infrastructure) is considered at strategic planning and subdivision design stage. It is imperative that environmentally sustainable design outcomes are incorporated from the outset of planning rather than at a later stage. The government therefore needs to look at regulatory controls to ensure they adequately provide for environmentally sustainable design.

The state government also needs to provide the community and industry with better access to information on how to make their developments more environmentally sustainable. In particular, government should undertake a stocktake of existing government initiatives, programs, and requirements to identify gaps and priorities.

The state government should develop a sustainability “index” to help consumers understand the relative importance of different design and development actions. In particular, there is a need for greater community understanding of what is required to achieve greater energy efficiency. Whilst the 5 star standard applies to new homes, increased consumer awareness is needed in relation to energy efficiency improvements that can be made through renovations and home improvements. It is important that energy efficiency and environmentally sustainable design messages are communicated simply and clearly to the broader community, as has been done through some home improvement television and radio programmes.

It is critical that the state government funds communication activities to highlight the social, environmental and economic benefits of more environmentally sustainable design and development. There is also a need for greater community understanding of the extent to which design and development has impacts on the environment that go well beyond the location of the building (eg. indirect impacts to do with materials used, labour employed etc).

The government should provide support for best practice models, particularly those emerging through the local government sector. The government should also resource water conservation, recycling and reuse demonstration projects. To facilitate this, the state government should consider the establishment of a sustainability fund from which local government could borrow to implement sustainability initiatives.

The state government must monitor and measure success with implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives. The government also needs to continue to review and develop environmental standards, incorporating good ideas from elsewhere in the world. Community access to information from academic experts and relevant research in relation to environmentally sustainable design and development needs to be improved.

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### **Priority Actions**

- Undertake stocktake of existing government environmental sustainability initiatives, programs and requirements to identify gaps and priorities.
- Develop a sustainability “index” to help consumers understand the relative importance of different design and development actions.
- Ensure that environmentally sustainable development (eg. water sensitive urban design) is considered at the strategic planning and subdivision design stage and ensure government regulatory controls adequately provide for environmentally sustainable design measures to be incorporated into developments.
- Incorporate initiatives to control weeds and vermin on public and private land into Green Wedge Management Plans.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*

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## PRIORITY ISSUE 12 – IMPROVING PLANNING DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Balancing the rights of citizens to have a say on what happens in their communities, the rights of land owners to develop their assets and the imperatives of the government’s strategic approach will be an ongoing challenge.

It is imperative that the state government allocates funding to the ‘front end’ of the planning system rather than to VCAT – ‘prevention rather than cure’. In particular, there is a real need to increase certainty by simplifying and clarifying rules, procedures and policies in decision-making wherever possible. This should be done by reducing the range of discretionary uses; increasing the number of uses that do not require a permit (subject to conditions), increasing the number of prohibited uses, and providing greater certainty of language in policy frameworks (eg. “must”, “must not”, and “shall”). The government should also undertake an examination of the Australia-wide work of the Development Assessment Forum.

Lack of qualified planning staff, high staff turnover and loss of collective knowledge will be another challenge to improving planning decision making processes. State government must resource initiatives to build the planning workforce and should also advocate for more university places for planning students. Local government will need to continue to address the issue of staff training and retaining experienced staff.

A key government priority should be implementation of relevant Melbourne 2030 initiatives which focus on: building the planning workforce; improving the quality of planning applications; reducing the number of matters that need planning approval; simplifying procedures; developing online application management systems; developing best practice methodologies for community engagement and consultation; and reducing the likelihood of disputes (see appendix 2 for detail of initiatives). State government must also monitor Melbourne 2030 and should commit to reviews on a three yearly basis rather than the five yearly commitment included in Melbourne 2030.

To build confidence and support for the planning process, the government must actively market Melbourne 2030 and educate the community about Melbourne 2030’s goals, objectives and benefits. The state government should also seek to convince the community that change is not necessarily bad and that there is a need to increase population levels in established suburbs to support retention of amenities (like schools and medical facilities) and economic development. Local government should be resourced to engage with communities on these issues.

### **Priority Actions**

- Implement the underlying principles and objectives of Better Decisions Faster.
- Increase certainty by: reducing range of discretionary uses; increasing no permit required uses (subject to conditions); increasing prohibited uses; and providing greater certainty of language in policy frameworks.
- Undertake examination of the Australia-wide work of the Development Assessment Forum.
- Resource initiatives to build the planning workforce.

*See appendix 2 for more detailed notes in relation to this priority issue.*