



September 2021

Social infrastructure in Melbourne's growth areas

A background paper to recommendation 73 of
Victoria's infrastructure strategy: Fund libraries
and aquatic centres in growth areas



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About this paper

Between the release of *Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy* in December 2020, and *Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021–2051* in August 2021, Infrastructure Victoria developed a new recommendation to:

Recommendation 73: Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas

In the next five years, increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's seven growth area municipalities

This background paper outlines the problem that the recommendation seeks to address. It also describes our research methodology and shares the evidence base and findings that were used to inform the new recommendation.

Aboriginal Acknowledgement

Infrastructure Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country in Victoria and pays respect to their elders past and present, as well as elders of other Aboriginal communities. We recognise that the state's infrastructure is built on land that has been managed by Aboriginal people for millennia.

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1. Introduction

Between the release of *Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy* in December 2020, and *Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021–2051 (Victoria's infrastructure strategy)* in August 2021, Infrastructure Victoria developed a new recommendation #73 to:

Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas

In the next five years, increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's seven growth area municipalities

This background paper outlines the problem that the recommendation seeks to address, describes Infrastructure Victoria's research methodology and shares the evidence base and findings that were used to inform the recommendation.

1.1 Methodology

Infrastructure Victoria undertook the following methodology and approach to identify the infrastructure problem, solution and recommended role for the Victorian Government:

- Researched the benefits of social infrastructure, including aquatic and recreation centres (ARCs) and libraries
- Collected data on the current levels of provision of ARCs and libraries across metropolitan Melbourne and fast-growing regional areas
- Mapped the current location of ARCs (including indoor facilities that operate all year, as well as outdoor seasonal facilities) and libraries, and levels of accessibility (see box below)
- Identified current per person provision gaps through comparison of 32 metropolitan local government areas in greater Melbourne (including Mitchell Shire) and Victoria's fastest growing regional areas
- Investigated future population need, including comparing rates of absolute population growth by local government area and younger population cohorts (0-19 years)
- Reviewed existing costs of facilities and funding mechanisms including developer contributions and grants
- Engaged with local and state government stakeholders.

Service area accessibility analysis

1600 and 3200 metre catchment areas were generated for each ARC and library using geographic information system (GIS) software.^{1 2} Our accessibility analysis created catchments using walking as the preferred mode of travel, and information about the street network from Open Street map.

The 20-minute neighbourhood concept uses an 800-metre walk as a benchmark for determining neighbourhood accessibility, a distance which corresponds to a 10-minute walk to a chosen destination.

However, ARCs and libraries do not service neighbourhood catchments but more typically service district or regional population catchments. This informed our choice of larger catchment areas of 1600 metres and 3200 metres rather than 800 metres.

Recommendation 73

Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas

In the next five years, increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's seven growth area municipalities.

Aquatic recreation centres and libraries operate every day, providing many different health and education services for people of all ages. Libraries help build literate, productive and engaged communities, earning \$4.30 in economic and social benefits for every dollar invested.⁴³ Aquatic centres improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, and help build strong social networks.⁴⁴ Each swimming pool visit generates \$26 in health benefits, collectively totalling \$1.82 billion each year in Victoria.⁴⁵

Victorians visit libraries more than 30 million times each year,⁴⁶ public pools attract more than 70 million visitors,⁴⁷ and aquatic centres can exceed 1 million yearly visits.⁴⁸ Visitors to these facilities also often spend money at nearby local businesses, such as retailers and cafes, supporting local jobs. Evidence shows growth areas have fewer libraries and aquatic centres than the rest of Melbourne and this will likely worsen over time as populations increase.⁴⁹ The challenge is demonstrated by the rapid growth in families with young children. Growth area councils contain 35% of all of Melbourne's 0 – 4 year old children, and by 2036 this will increase to 40%.⁵⁰ As these children grow up, existing libraries and aquatic centres will be unable to provide them the same access as their peers elsewhere.

Libraries and aquatic centres have large upfront capital costs. New libraries can cost from \$20 million to \$30 million and

new aquatic centres \$50 million to \$70 million.⁵¹ Historically, the Victorian Government provided substantial funding for these facilities.⁵² The Victorian and Australian governments sometimes provide sporadic funding for regional aquatic centres.⁵³ More recently, metropolitan local governments typically fund the majority of capital costs for new aquatic centres and libraries, while the Victorian Government only contributes small amounts. Current funding does not adequately account for the high need to provide new regional-scale infrastructure in growth areas,⁵⁴ which cannot be funded by development contributions.⁵⁵ Growth area councils need to prioritise limited funding to provide infrastructure across multiple rapidly growing communities and upgrade older infrastructure in their often disadvantaged established suburbs.⁵⁶

Figure 27 shows that growth areas have fewer libraries per person than other areas. Figure 28 shows that new growth areas will not have access to local library services.

Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Melton, Wyndham, and Whittlesea will likely each need a new library in the next five years, and planning for a new library for Mitchell's growth areas should start now. A new aquatic centre is likely to be required in each of Casey, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham in the next five years, and planning should start immediately for timely delivery of new aquatic centres in each of Cardinia, Hume, and Mitchell.

The quality of existing aquatic centres varies across these municipalities, with some being older seasonal outdoor pools. For example, in the Shire of Mitchell, planning for new facilities will need to address the projected rapid growth expected in the south that will be disconnected from the Shire's existing older infrastructure located in the rural townships to the north. Shared planning with adjoining councils and the Victorian Government can help ensure new facilities do not affect the viability and sustainability of neighbouring ones.⁵⁷

Each municipality should receive up to \$200,000 for aquatic centre planning and \$100,000 for library planning. The Victorian Government should fund up to one-third of the cost of new facilities, capped at \$20 million for aquatic centres and \$10 million for libraries, with councils to provide funding for the remaining capital costs and operational expenses. Flexible funding could support staged approaches to delivery, where preferred by councils.⁵⁸ This investment supports growth area councils to address provision, service and access gaps for this essential infrastructure.

The return on investment can be even higher when facilities are integrated with other services. More transparent sector infrastructure plans (see recommendation 32) could allow the Victorian and local governments to undertake joint service planning to deliver integrated facilities.

Figure 1: Recommendation 73: Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas

2. Aquatic and recreation centres and libraries

2.1 Benefits and roles of aquatic and recreation centres and libraries

Infrastructure Victoria undertook research to understand the need for ARCs and libraries in Melbourne's growth areas. While this infrastructure can be some of the most expensive social infrastructure to build in new suburbs, the benefits provided to both their communities and to the businesses located in these precincts can outweigh the costs.

Unlike many other types of social infrastructure, ARCs and libraries usually operate every day of the week and almost every day of the year, providing many different health, wellbeing, and education services for people of all ages and abilities.

ARCs offer a range of sport, recreation, and health services, from learn to swim classes for babies, through to hydrotherapy for older people. Two case studies provided below, Yawa Aquatic Centre in Rosebud and AquaPulse in Hoppers Crossing, demonstrate the wide range of facilities and programs that can be provided in a contemporary multi-purpose facility. These facilities offer opportunities for fitness, social inclusion, health, and wellbeing. They can be programmed with a range of services to meet different community needs. AquaPulse has a focus on the needs of younger families for example, through provision of water slides and provision of childcare and a three-year-old kindergarten program. Yawa Aquatic Centre offers programs to meet the needs of an ageing population, such as wellness, fitness and therapy for older people. Services that are provided from the facilities can be tailored to meet changing community needs over time.

Libraries help build literate, productive and engaged communities. They also support education outcomes for all ages, from early literacy programs for pre-schoolers through to teaching digital literacy and technology skills for older people. The facilities in the two case studies, Realm in Ringwood and the Melton Library, are meeting their community needs in different ways and highlight that modern libraries offer much more than just books for loan. Realm is an integral part of the Eastland activity centre and located next to the Ringwood Railway Station. Realm offers business support, co-working spaces, meeting rooms and youth activities. It is possible that suburban libraries may be able to take on an even larger role to support more people working away from a centralised workplace (but not from home) in a post-pandemic context. The Melton Library, located in the Melton town centre, meets its community's needs by offering programs for families and babies such as maternal and child health but also support for the large multicultural community such as help with English language classes.



Images: Courtesy of Wyndham City Council

Case Study: AquaPulse

Opened in 2015, AquaPulse is a regional aquatic and recreation centre located in the City of Wyndham and catering for the needs of residents in Melbourne's western suburbs.

AquaPulse provides a diverse range of facilities and activities, and is hugely successful, attracting up to one million visits per year.

The cost to build AquaPulse, and the co-located Encore Events Centre, was \$54.4 million. AquaPulse provides health, wellbeing and leisure services and activities, catering for all ages and abilities including:

- An Olympic-sized 50-metre pool for lap swimming, lessons and training, and a 25-metre warm water pool for exercise and hydrotherapy
- Separate spa, sauna and steam room
- Children's play pool with water slides
- 1000m² gym with a spin room, two rooms for group training and cardio
- Health and wellbeing programs including dance, yoga and Pilates, meditation and mindfulness and fitness programs for older adults
- Creche offering occasional care and three-year old kinder program
- Café and outdoor piazza area with a giant screen

AquaPulse also has accessible facilities to maximise inclusion including ramp access to entry and all pools, wheelchair accessibility, parents room, hoist access to the warm water pool, elevator access to the gym, accessible change rooms, braille signage throughout and aquatic wheelchairs.

AquaPulse is open every day, and during the evening on weekdays.





Images: Courtesy of Buchan; photography by Michael Gazzola

Case Study: Realm Ringwood

Realm Ringwood is a multi-purpose community facility, architecturally designed as the centrepiece of the newly developed town square precinct. Opened in October 2015, Realm is located a short walking distance to Ringwood Station, and is situated within the Eastland shopping centre precinct. The facility interfaces with both civic and commercial realms. It is integrated with high quality public realm, services, retail, and a full range of hospitality experiences including cafes, restaurants, and rooftop bars.

Realm is open every day and is a library, learning and cultural centre, integrated with a range of facilities and services for all residents of Maroondah. These include:

- BizHub - Bookable co-working spaces and office amenities – light filled secure co-working spaces and bookable meeting rooms
- Knowledge and innovation centre
- Youth precinct centred on digital technology
- Art space with gallery and exhibition spaces throughout
- Maroondah Council customer service centre
- Café with reading spaces and magazine and newspaper collections
- Free Wi-Fi and study areas throughout
- Acoustically treated pods for small groups
- Accessible toilet facilities

The project cost for Realm was approximately \$24 million. The site was developed in partnership with the owner of Eastland, Queensland Investment Corporation, and involved a range of commercial negotiations, including land swap deals, to minimise costs to council ratepayers.³



Social infrastructure in Melbourne's new growth areas



Images: Courtesy of Melton City Council

Case Study: Melton Library

Melton Library is a sustainably designed and energy efficient facility that opened in 2013. It is located in the Melton township and cost \$20 million to build.⁴

The library is open every day and integrates many services for community members, and integrates health, wellbeing, and education programs for a range of diverse audiences.

The multi-purpose facility includes the following:

- Housing the library's collection of books, journals and resources
- Providing lifelong learning and community activities, with flexible spaces to cater for large and small groups
- 11 meeting spaces, varying in size from a 90-seat auditorium to more intimate meeting rooms for small groups. These are available to residents and can be booked for various activities including community group meetings, arts and craft groups or business meetings
- Offering programs for all ages and for a range of community needs including, programs for new arrivals such as providing English conversation classes and support for citizenship tests; job lab support for resume and job applications; after school programs for primary and secondary school students; and craft and activity groups to reduce social isolation
- Offering children's programs and Maternal and Child Health services
- A dedicated recording studio available for hire
- Using the latest in wireless connectivity with well-equipped computer training rooms.
- Changing places - fully accessible toilets, with adult change table and hoist to ensure the centre is an inclusive place for people with disabilities





Images: Courtesy of Yawa Aquatic Centre

Case Study: Yawa Aquatic Centre, Rosebud

Opened in 2021, the Yawa Aquatic Centre is a regional aquatic and recreation centre located in Rosebud, in Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. Yawa Aquatic Centre is located in the existing sports precinct of Rosebud.

It is a modern facility that provides programs and activities to cater for all ages and abilities. Yawa Aquatic Centre has a strong focus on a number of health-related programs and services, aimed at providing for the significant ageing population of the region. It is expected to attract over 400,000 visits per year, an average of almost 1100 visits per day.

Yawa Aquatic Centre cost approximately \$40 million to develop and includes state-of-the-art facilities, with an important focus on inclusion and accessibility. In addition to an Olympic-sized swimming pool, learn to swim pool and warm water pool, the Centre has a fully equipped 720m² gymnasium, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and a multi-purpose room that hosts a range of health, fitness and wellbeing classes.

In addition, Yawa Aquatic Centre features a wellness centre that includes allied health consulting, exercise physiology, steam and sauna rooms, massage and physiotherapy, relaxation therapy, wellbeing programs for older adults and for sports recovery, while Peninsula Health also offers a range of services on site.

Yawa Aquatic Centre aspires to be a true community hub, is open every day and includes a café. Its accessibility includes high priority disabled access, changing places, gradual, railed, ramp entry to all pools, portable pool entry hoist and wheelchair access to the spa within the warm water pool.



Social infrastructure in Melbourne's new growth areas

While the cost to build these facilities can be high, the beneficial outcomes are substantial because they provide multi-purpose facilities and a wide range of programs with opportunity for the whole community to use the facilities seven days a week. It has been estimated that libraries in Victoria provide \$4.30 in economic and social benefits for every dollar invested.⁵ A South Australian study that researched the benefits of libraries showed that the benefit cost ratio for public libraries ranged between 2.3 for rural libraries and 2.8 for metropolitan libraries.⁶

ARCs improve physical and mental health, wellbeing, and help build strong social networks.⁷ It has been estimated that each swimming pool visit generates \$26.00 in health benefits to the community, and in a typical year there are 70 million visits to Victorian ARCs.⁸ Therefore, the collective health benefits from aquatic centres total \$1.82 billion each year.⁹ Some ARCs, such as AquaPulse in the City of Wyndham, can exceed one million annual visits.¹⁰ A recent study shows that there is a \$4.87 social return on investment for every dollar spent on an aquatic facility in capital cities.¹¹ Visitors to these facilities also often spend money at nearby local businesses, such as retailers and cafes, supporting local economies and local jobs.

These facilities are highly valued by people of all ages and can be slow to arrive in new growth area communities. The City of Whittlesea's submission to Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy highlights this challenge. The submission points to the example of the 20-year-old suburb of Mernda-Doreen, which has a population of approximately 50,000 residents. In Mernda-Doreen, there has been a long-held plan for a community hub including an aquatic centre and a library, but there remains a significant funding challenge to deliver these facilities, despite the land having been secured for this infrastructure.¹² Without additional support from the Victorian Government, many new communities will miss out on the benefits that these facilities provide.

3. Growth area social infrastructure provision challenge

Our research has highlighted three main challenges for growth area local government planning and delivery of ARCs and libraries:

1. managing rapid rates of population growth,
2. managing the high cost of delivering new infrastructure in greenfield suburbs, and
3. limited funding opportunities exist that enable planning and delivery of regional scale infrastructure.

These challenges are further outlined below.

3.1 Rapid population growth

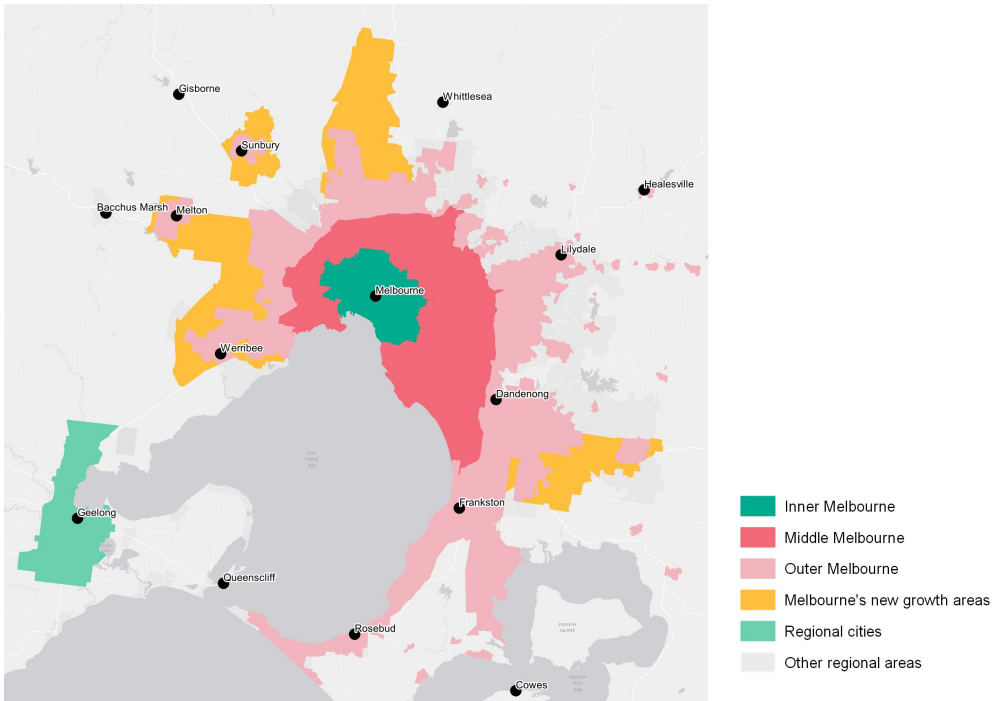
The populations of the seven designated growth areas on the outskirts of Melbourne are experiencing rapid growth, encouraged by relatively affordable housing.¹³ The growth areas in the local government areas of Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham are projected to be home to over 930,000 more people by 2036. This is roughly equivalent to adding the population of around 10 cities the size of Bendigo and represents over 40% of projected statewide growth (see Figure 3).¹⁴

These growing populations are often more diverse, with a higher proportion of Aboriginal Victorians and migrant communities than other parts of Victoria. While the COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily slowed population growth, many more Victorians will still continue to choose to live in Melbourne's designated growth areas.

These additional people will require thousands of new homes. Unlike in established suburbs, construction in growth areas occurs on land that was previously farmland. They have little existing infrastructure and small starting populations.¹⁵ For the seven local governments that contain growth areas, the challenge of managing this growth in their greenfield suburbs is compounded by the challenge of concurrently maintaining their existing infrastructure in their established areas. Existing infrastructure is also under pressure from new residents arriving each year. To ensure the liveability of new suburbs, residents need to have access to social infrastructure and to the services they provide.

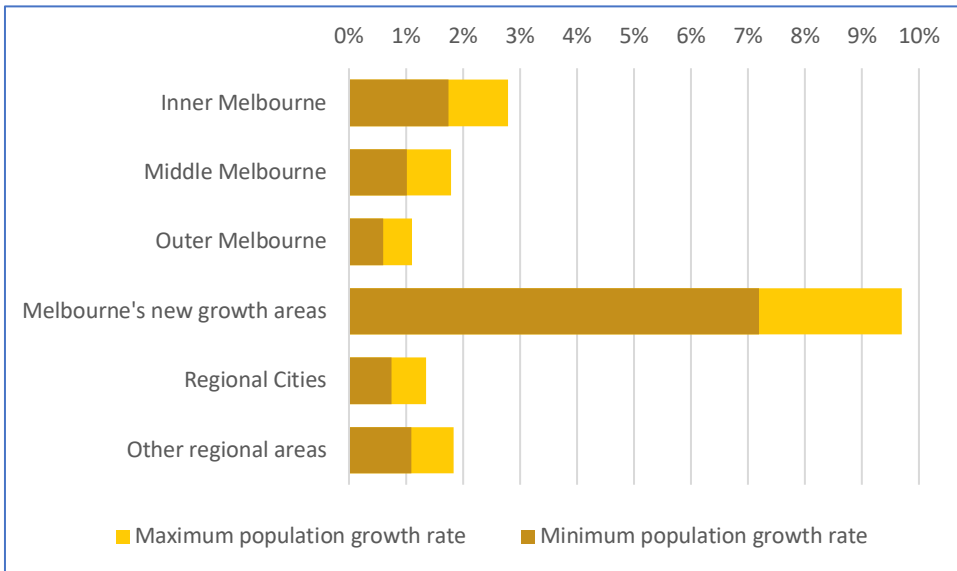
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Figure 2: Melbourne's Functional Urban Areas



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021
 Data: SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd (SGS), 2019

Figure 3: New growth areas grow rapidly from 2018 to 2036

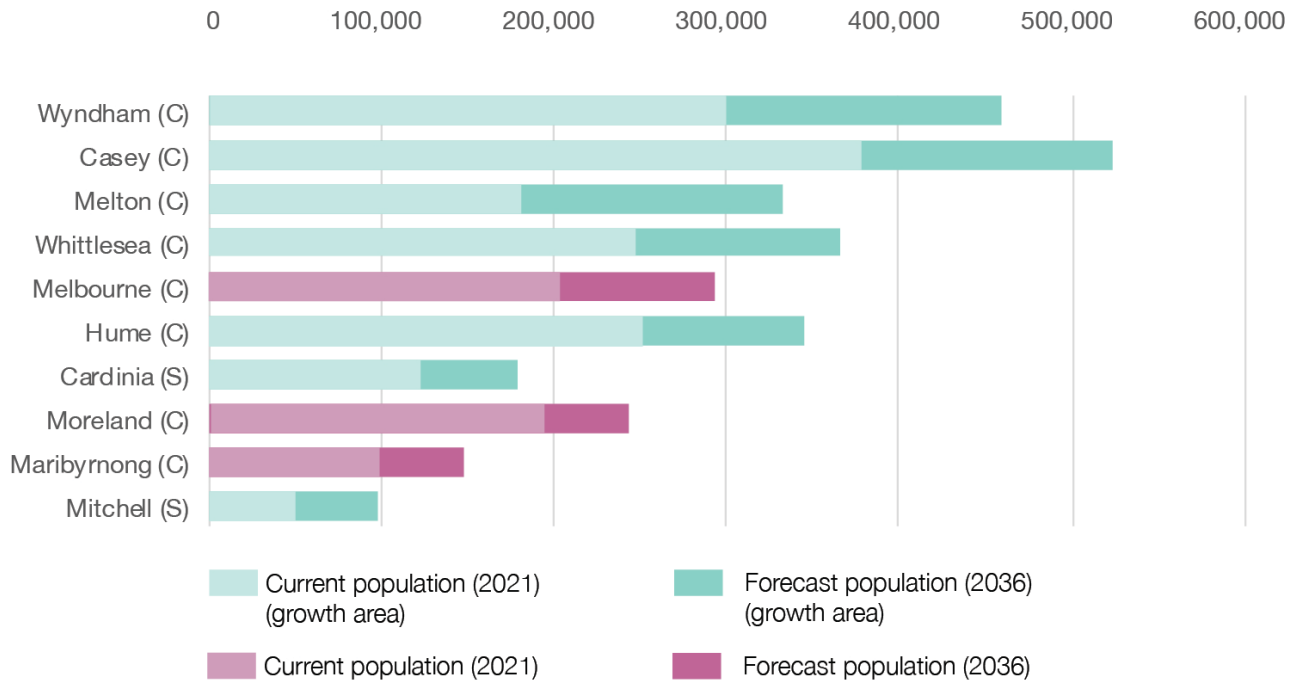


Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021
 Data: Victoria in Future, 2019

Functional Urban Areas are a custom geography defined by SGS Economics & Planning on behalf of Infrastructure Victoria.¹⁶ Melbourne's new growth areas are contained within seven municipalities: Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea, Wyndham. These local government areas also contain established suburbs in Outer Melbourne. The only exception is Mitchell Shire Council, which has historically been a regional municipality, but now contains growth area suburbs within Melbourne's urban growth boundary.

Figure 3 shows the scale of forecast growth for Melbourne’s new growth areas across two population growth scenarios modelled by Infrastructure Victoria for *Victoria’s infrastructure strategy*. Under either scenario, the highest rates of population growth will be in growth areas compared to all other areas. Figure 2 shows the location of these urban areas.

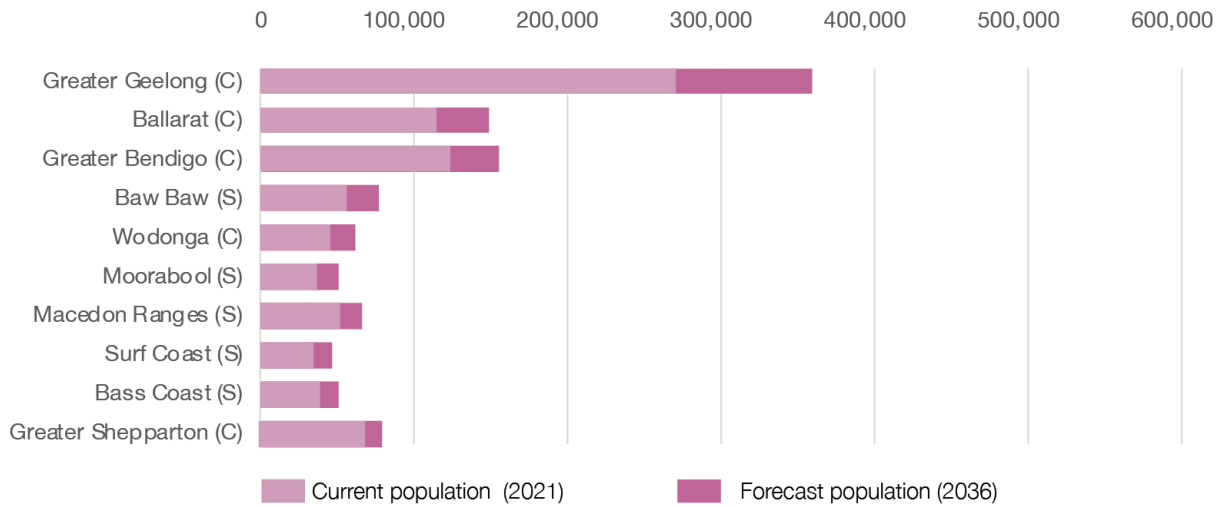
Figure 4: Top 10 fastest growing metropolitan local government areas: Population in 2021 and forecast population in 2036



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021
 Data: Victoria in Future, 2019

Figure 4 shows forecast additional population in the top 10 fastest growing metropolitan local government areas between 2021 and 2036, while Figure 5 shows forecast additional population in the top ten fastest growing regional local government areas between 2021 and 2036.

Figure 5: Top 10 fastest growing regional local government areas: population in 2021 and forecast population in 2036



Source: Infrastructure Victoria 2021
 Data: Victoria in Future, 2019

Figures 4 and 5 show that currently, the population of the local government areas of Casey and Wyndham are larger than the City of Greater Geelong, and the local government areas of Hume, Melton and Whittlesea are each larger than both the Cities of Ballarat and Bendigo. These trends are forecast to continue for the coming decades.

3.2 Cost of new infrastructure in greenfield suburbs

On average, the Victorian Government spends about \$50,000, and local governments \$38,000, on infrastructure to support each new home in Melbourne’s growth areas.¹⁷ Developer contributions in new growth areas average around \$23,000 for each home, which leaves a large gap in funding, and neither level of government recovers the full cost of infrastructure provision from the private sector.¹⁸ This gap in funding can be a barrier to the timely provision of new infrastructure.

While the need for infrastructure in new and developing communities is urgent, some types of infrastructure arrive long after they are required.¹⁹ Outer suburbs and new growth areas may offer the most affordable *homes* to purchase, but they do not necessarily provide affordable *living* because they are less connected to the rest of Melbourne and associated opportunities. In addition, access to a range of social infrastructure is limited, particularly in the newest suburbs.²⁰ A lack of social infrastructure can limit engagement with sport, recreation, social inclusion, and cultural expression.

Libraries and ARCs have large upfront capital costs: new libraries can cost from \$20 million to \$30 million and new ARCs between \$40 million and \$70 million.²¹ The case studies provided in this report highlight that 21st century libraries and ARCs are regional scale social infrastructure investments that provide for much more than places to borrow books or go for a swim. These multi-purpose facilities are designed to service large catchments and provide a wide range of services, seven days a week, for all ages and abilities.

3.3 Need to better plan and fund new social infrastructure in growth areas

Like all Victorians, residents of growth areas expect access to social infrastructure that meets their health, wellbeing, education, sport, and recreation needs. But many rapidly growing areas lack

sufficient social infrastructure to meet demand. To help address this, planning for new suburbs needs to better integrate social infrastructure. In some cases, only minor changes could enable existing and new facilities to provide multiple services, or to deliver infrastructure to support joint use. For example, the Victorian Government's delivery of many new schools in growth areas could include shared community use of competition-sized sports courts (which are standard in all new schools). Where joint use agreements are in place, the wider community can use these courts and facilities outside school hours for competition sports and community arts and performances.



Aintree Primary School, City of Melton. Photography: Anthaea Dance Indec

Of the 100 new schools the Victorian Government is planning to deliver from 2019 to 2026, approximately three quarters are likely to be in metropolitan growth area local government areas. To date, 25 are complete and 13 new growth area schools will be constructed by 2023–24.²² The Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC), which is available for state infrastructure, has been instrumental in funding these new schools in growth areas.²³

The infrastructure planning, funding and delivery challenges are large and complex for growth area local governments. Through our engagement for *Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy*, we heard that some growth area local governments need to deliver a range of new local and regional-scale infrastructure across up to seventeen different growth fronts at the same time.²⁴

Early in the development of new suburbs, local governments typically provide basic community infrastructure, such as community meeting spaces, early years facilities and playgrounds. This infrastructure is usually funded through a mix of council funding, development contributions, and Victorian Government grant programs including lapsing or annual grant programs such as the *Growing Suburbs Fund*.²⁵

Current Victorian Government grants for local governments are not designed to support the planning and delivery of expensive, new, regional-scale facilities such as ARCs and libraries in greenfield locations. The *Growing Suburbs Fund* is typically an annual fund of approximately \$50

million for 16 local governments, including 10 interface (which includes growth areas) and six peri-urban local governments. The fund is designed for 'shovel-ready' projects, to respond quickly to pressures supporting growing populations, by bringing forward completion of new or upgraded local community facilities. Other Victorian Government funding programs, including the *Living Libraries Infrastructure Fund*, make a small contribution of up to \$1.5 million towards the cost of constructing a new library. This is approximately 5% of the usual cost of building a new library.²⁶

A clear funding gap to support the timely delivery of ARCs and libraries exists. Historically, the Victorian Government provided substantial funding for these facilities.²⁷ The Victorian and Federal Governments provide ad hoc funding for ARCs in regional Victoria.²⁸ More recently, metropolitan local governments have typically funded the majority of capital costs for new ARCs and libraries, while the Victorian Government only contributes small amounts. Current funding does not adequately take into account the large and urgent need to provide new regional-scale infrastructure in growth areas.²⁹ Local government stakeholders have confirmed that these facilities cannot be funded by existing development contributions mechanisms.³⁰

Growth area local governments need to prioritise limited funding to provide infrastructure across multiple rapidly growing communities and concurrently upgrade older infrastructure in their established suburbs, which can include some of Melbourne's most disadvantaged areas.³¹ They need to immediately start planning for infrastructure to meet the needs of new residents who will arrive in the short, medium and longer term. They also require funding certainty to support both planning and delivery which can take five or more years.

Should the Victorian Government take on a stronger partnership role to plan and fund ARCs and libraries, they could create opportunities for shared service and infrastructure planning. For example there could be opportunities to integrate primary health services, early years services, skills training, spaces for remote learning/working, co-working spaces or other services into ARCs and libraries. There could also be opportunities to co-locate facilities such as ARCs close to schools. Further efforts could be made to identify shared site opportunities, such as in Warrnambool where the Council is currently delivering a new library located on a TAFE site.³²

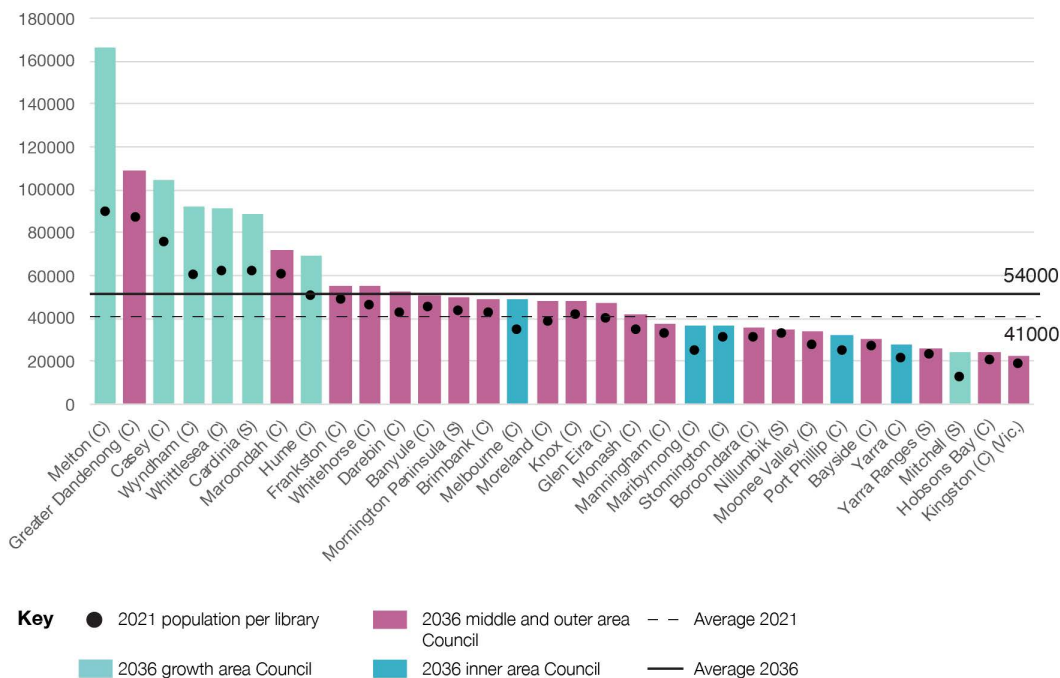
Currently, local governments have the dual challenge of meeting community expectations and engaging with potential funding partners, without having the funding certainty required to deliver social infrastructure or full awareness of Victorian Government infrastructure plans for their local government areas. More transparent sector infrastructure plans (see *Victoria's infrastructure strategy*, recommendation 32) could allow the Victorian and local governments to undertake joint service planning to deliver integrated facilities.

4. Provision and access gaps

4.1 Provision rates of aquatic and recreation centres and libraries in Melbourne's new growth areas

Figures 6 and 7 show that growth areas have fewer ARCs and libraries than almost all other metropolitan local government areas. This difference is likely to grow as populations increase.³³ The challenge is further accentuated by the rapid growth in families with young children who generate much of the demand for these facilities (Figures 8 and 9). Over one-third of Melbourne's 0- to 4-year-old children live in growth area local government areas, and by 2036 this is projected to increase to 40%.³⁴ As these children grow up, existing libraries and aquatic centres will be unable to provide them the same access as their peers living elsewhere in Melbourne.

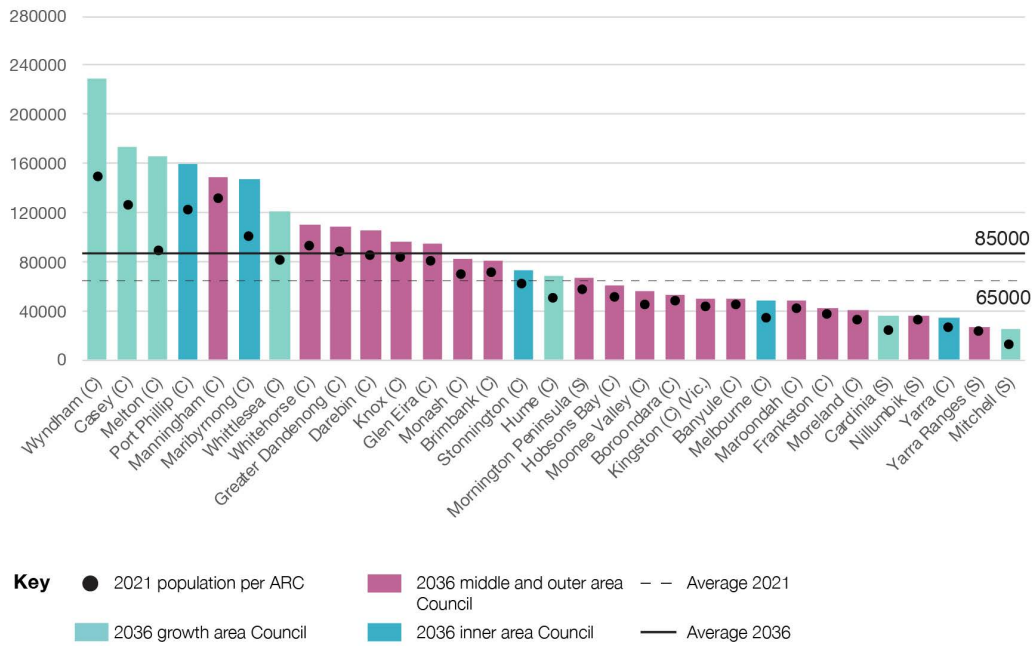
Figure 6: Growth areas have fewer libraries per person



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Vicmap Features of Interest, Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, updated Dec 2020; Victoria in Future 2019

Figure 7: Growth areas have fewer ARCs per person



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

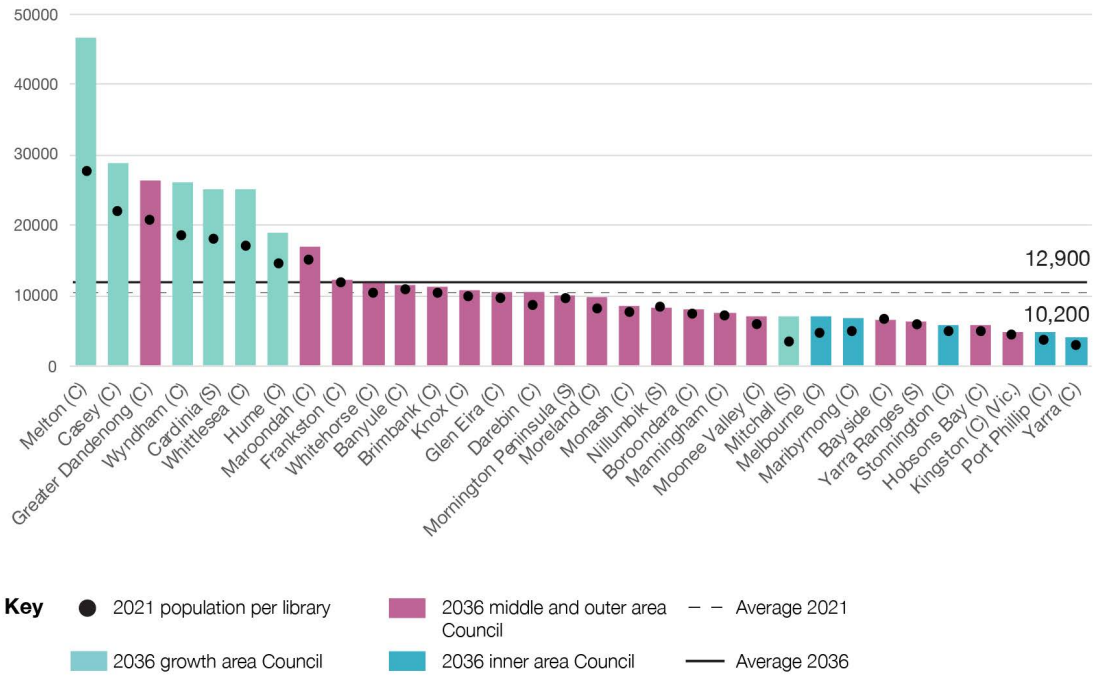
Data: Internal research; Sport and Recreation Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Updated 2016; Victoria in Future, 2019

Figures 8 and 9 show that the level of provision of ARCs and libraries for young people (0- to 19-years-old) is even starker when compared to other metropolitan local government areas. This disparity will become more pronounced as the population in growth areas increases.

For example:

- The provision rate for young people in the City of Melton is one library for 28,000 people. In the Cities of Yarra or Port Phillip, the rate is one library for every 3,000 young people.
- The City of Wyndham has just one ARC for every 48,000 young people, compared with the City of Melbourne with one ARC for every 5000 young people.

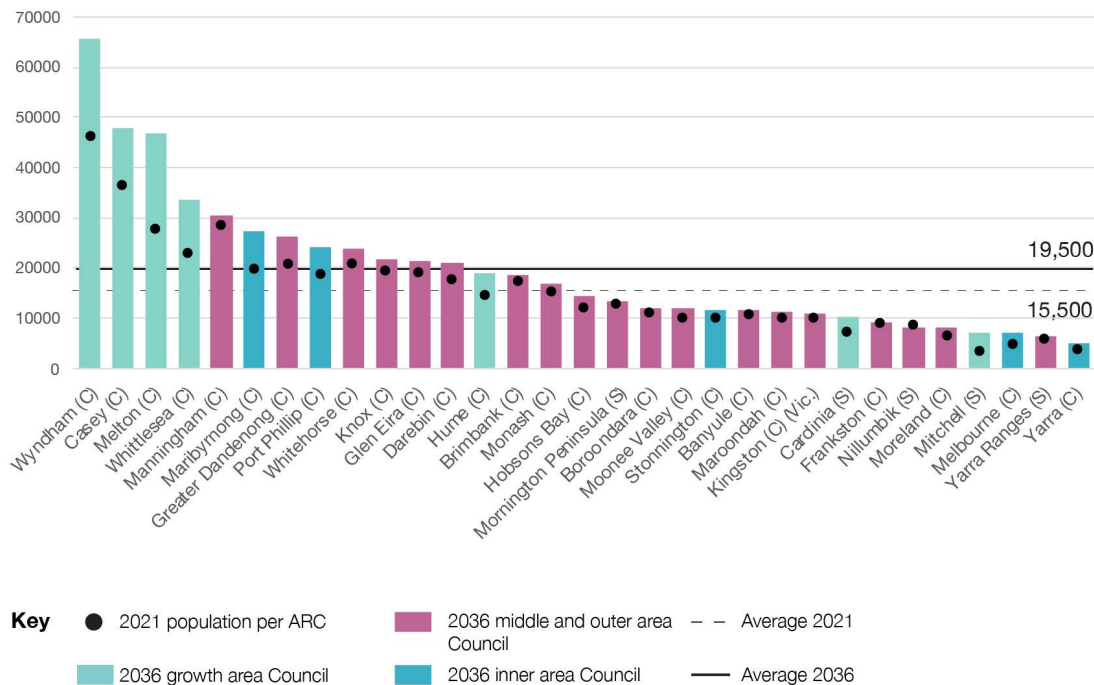
Figure 8: Growth areas have fewer libraries per young person under age 19



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Vicmap Features of Interest, Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, updated Dec 2020; Victoria in Future, 2019

Figure 9: Growth areas have fewer ARCs per young person under age 19



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

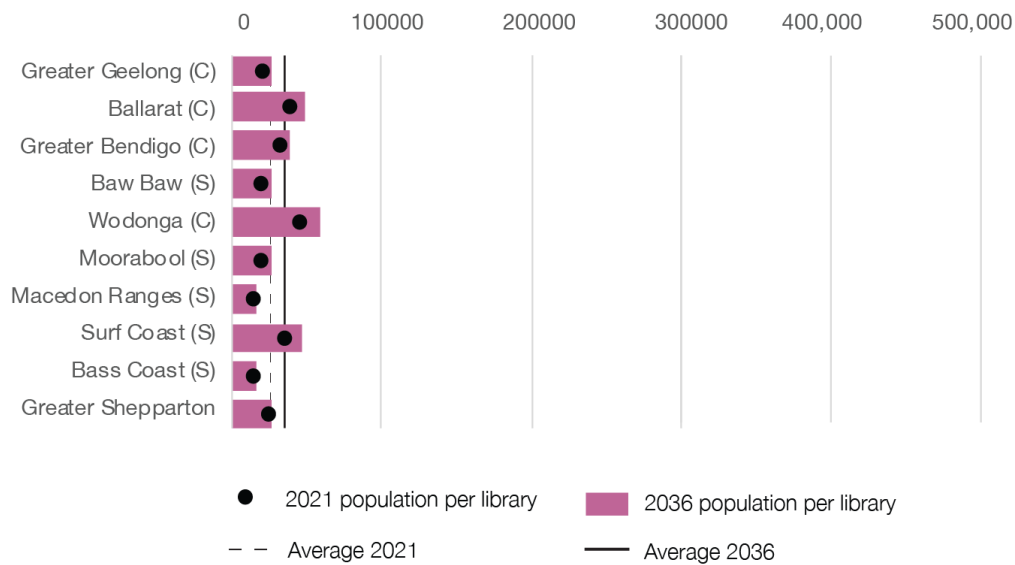
Data: Sport and Recreation Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Updated 2016; Victoria in Future, 2019

4.2 Provision rates of aquatic and recreation centres and libraries in Victoria's fastest growing regional areas

For comparison, Figures 10 and 11 show the level of existing provision of ARCs and libraries in Victoria's fastest growing regional local government areas. While Infrastructure Victoria did not undertake any assessment of the condition, quality or location of these rural and regional facilities, the figures clearly demonstrate that the rate of provision of these facilities, per person, is notably lower in Melbourne's growth areas. For example:

- Melton has one library for approximately 90,000 people, compared to the City of Ballarat which has one library for approximately 50,000 people.
- Wyndham has one ARC for approximately 150,000 people, compared to the City of Greater Geelong which has one ARC for approximately 75,000 people. This includes a mix of indoor and outdoor seasonal pools.

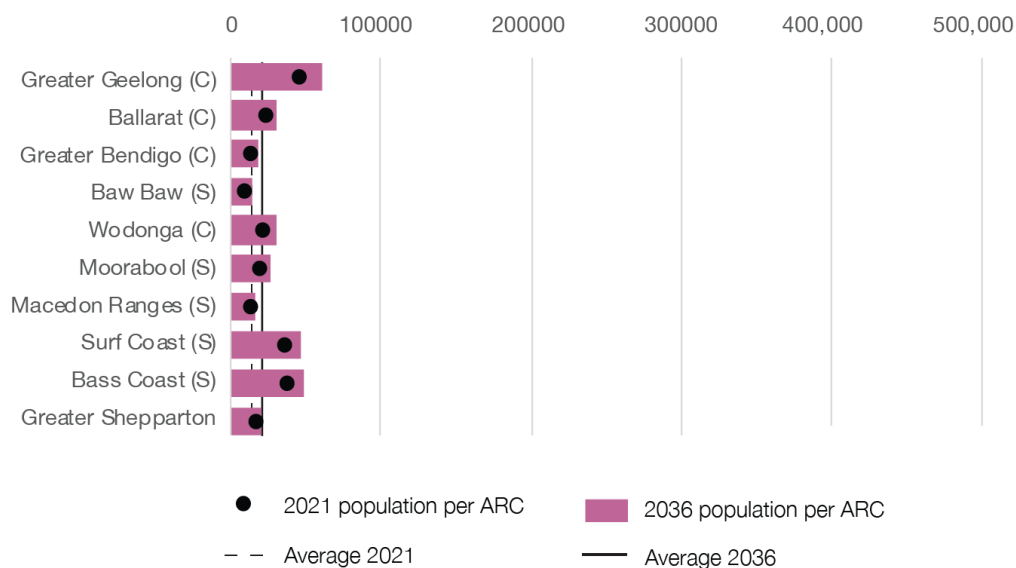
Figure 10: Population provision rates for libraries in the top ten fastest growing regional local government areas



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Vicmap Features of Interest, Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, updated Dec 2020; Victoria in Future

Figure 11: Population provision rates for ARCs in the top ten fastest growing regional local government areas



Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Internal research; Sport and Recreation Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Updated 2016; Victoria in Future, 2019

4.3 Access to aquatic and recreation centres and libraries in Melbourne's new growth areas

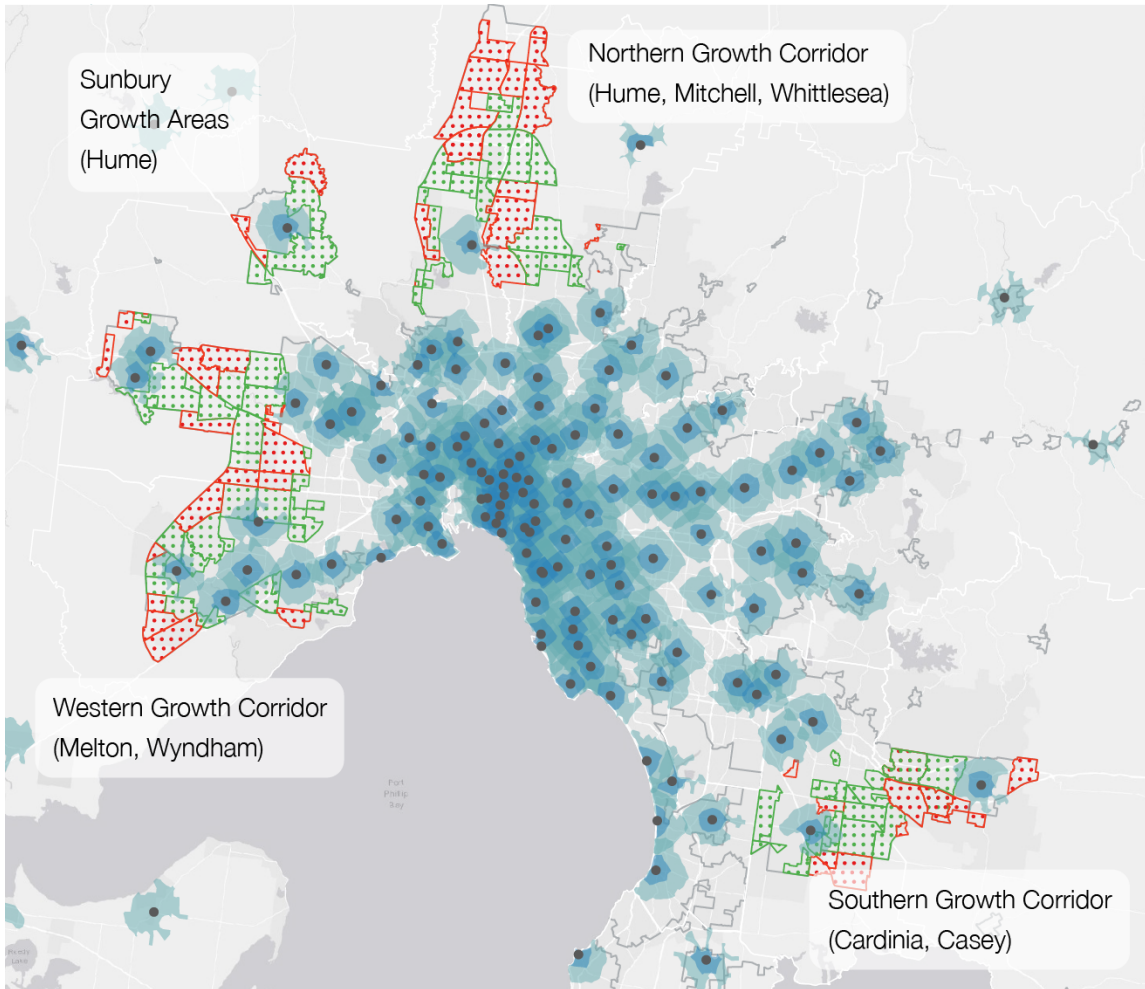
Without intervention, many new residential areas in Melbourne's fastest growing suburbs will not have good access to an ARC or library in the coming years.

Figures 12 and 13 show the location of existing libraries and ARCs in existing and proposed suburbs in Melbourne's growth area corridors. This includes areas that have approved Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) and those within the urban growth boundary that will have a completed PSP at some time in the future.

The maps show that there will be access gaps for both ARCs and libraries:

- in growth areas to the east of Melton,
- in the northern and south-western growth areas in Wyndham,
- most of the northern growth corridor (Hume, Mitchell, and Whittlesea), and
- most of the south-eastern growth corridor (Cardinia and Casey).

Figure 12: Access gaps for libraries in new growth areas



Key

● Library

Catchment

● 1600 m

● 3200 m

Precinct structure plan

▭ Complete and approved

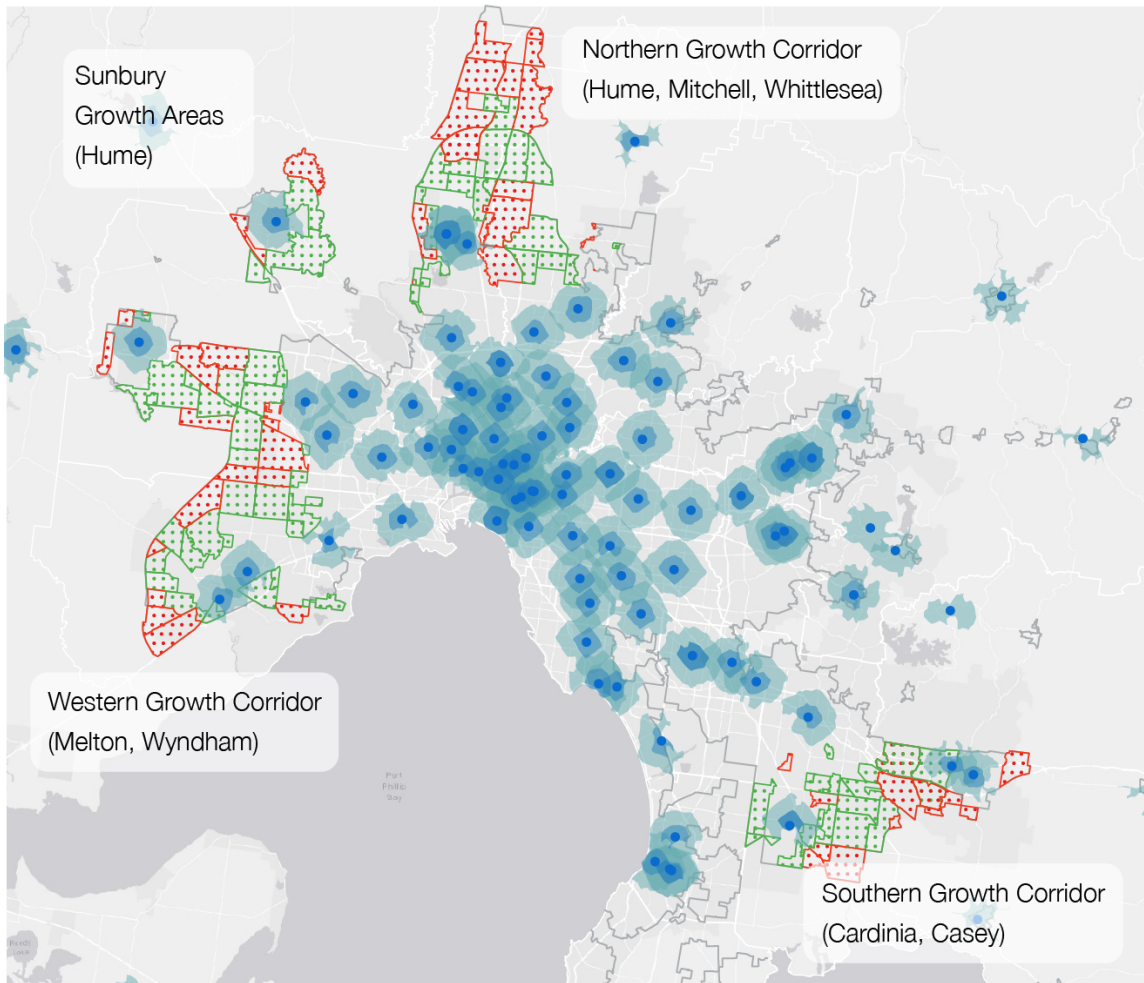
▭ Yet to be completed

— Urban growth boundary

Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Sport and Recreation Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Updated 2016; Victoria in Future, 2019; OpenStreetMap 2018; OpenRouteService (ORS Tools), 2020

Figure 13: Access gaps for ARCs in new growth areas



Key

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aquatic centre or swimming pool | <p>Catchment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1600 m ● 3200 m | <p>Precinct structure plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete and approved ■ Yet to be completed — Urban growth boundary |
|---|--|---|

Source: Infrastructure Victoria, 2021

Data: Vicmap Features of Interest 2020; Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, updated Dec 2020; OpenStreetMap 2018; OpenRouteService (ORS Tools), 2020

5. Role for Victorian and local governments

5.1 Findings and recommendations

The Victorian Government needs to provide additional support to local governments to both plan and fund new libraries and ARCs in Melbourne's fast-growing greenfield areas due to:

- the comparatively high rate and projected scale of population growth for these areas, including the considerable number of families and young children who will continue to move to these areas,
- the low levels of current per person provision of facilities compared to other metropolitan and fast growing rural and regional local government areas,
- the comparatively poor levels of current and future accessibility to existing facilities in new and future suburbs compared to other metropolitan areas, and
- the need for adequate time for planning and for funding certainty to deliver new facilities.

The following recommendation is made in *Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021–2051*:

Recommendation 73: Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas

In the next five years, increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's seven growth area municipalities

Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Whittlesea, and Wyndham local government areas will likely each need a new library in the next five years, and planning for a new library for Mitchell's growth areas should start now. A new ARC is likely to be required in each of Casey, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham local government areas in the next five years, and planning should start immediately for timely delivery of new aquatic centres in each of Cardinia, Hume, and Mitchell.

The quality of existing aquatic centres varies across these municipalities, with some being older seasonal outdoor pools. For example, in Mitchell Shire planning for new facilities will need to address the projected rapid growth expected in the south of the municipality that will be disconnected from the Shire's existing older infrastructure located in its rural townships to the north. Shared planning with adjoining local governments and the Victorian Government can help ensure new facilities do not affect the viability and sustainability of neighbouring ones.³⁵ Shared planning will also facilitate opportunities for local governments to work together and with a range of Victorian Government departments and other service providers to plan for co-located or integrated facilities.

Each of Melbourne's seven growth area local governments should receive from the Victorian Government up to \$200,000 for aquatic centre planning and \$100,000 for library planning. The Victorian Government should also fund up to one-third of the cost of new facilities, capped at \$20 million for aquatic centres and \$10 million for libraries, with local governments to provide funding for the remaining capital costs and operational expenses. Flexible funding could support staged

approaches to delivery if preferred by councils.³⁶ This investment will be of sufficient scale to enable growth area local governments to leverage other funds, including either through their own revenue or potentially from private, not-for profit, government or other partnerships, and will better support growth area local governments to address provision, service, and access gaps for this essential infrastructure.

The return on investment will be even higher when facilities are integrated with other services. More transparent sector infrastructure plans (see *Victoria's infrastructure strategy*, recommendation 32) could allow the Victorian and local governments to undertake joint service planning to deliver integrated facilities. For example, and depending on community need, future libraries could potentially be integrated with spaces for not-for-profit service providers, business support/training, tertiary training or even with council services such as maternal and child health services. New ARCs could be integrated with health services such as primary health care or aged care services.

5.2 Costs of recommendation 73 in *Victoria's infrastructure strategy*

Infrastructure Victoria estimates that the Victorian Government implementation and capital costs of Recommendation 73 will be between \$200 and \$300 million over a five-year period from 2021 to 2026. The cost range assumes:

- Each growth area council receives up to:
 - \$200,000 for aquatic and recreation centre planning
 - \$100,000 for library planning.
- The Victorian Government contributes up to a third of the cost of new facilities, capped at:
 - \$20 million for aquatic and recreation centres for each growth area council
 - \$10 million for libraries for each growth area council.
- A level of staffing to establish and manage the fund and provide support for local government planning.

Libraries and aquatic centres have large upfront capital costs. The costing above recognises that new libraries can cost from \$20 million to \$30 million. For example, the Ivanhoe library cost \$34 million, and the Springvale library hub cost \$32 million.³⁷³⁸ The costing also recognises that new aquatic centres can cost from \$50 million to \$70 million. For example, the Wyndham aquatic centre cost \$54 million.³⁹

The infrastructure operating costs have not been assessed, and the recommendation assumes no infrastructure operating costs to the Victorian Government, as the infrastructure is owned and operated by growth area councils.

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About us

Infrastructure Victoria is an independent advisory body, which began operating on 1 October 2015 under the *Infrastructure Victoria Act 2015*.

Infrastructure Victoria has three main functions:

- preparing a 30-year infrastructure strategy for Victoria, which is refreshed every three to five years
- providing written advice to government on specific infrastructure matters
- publishing original research on infrastructure-related issues

Infrastructure Victoria also supports the development of sectoral infrastructure plans by government departments and agencies.

The aim of Infrastructure Victoria is to take a long-term, evidence-based view of infrastructure planning and raise the level of community debate about infrastructure provision.

Infrastructure Victoria does not directly oversee or fund infrastructure projects.



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