



September 2023

Strategy objectives engagement report

Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy



About us

Infrastructure Victoria is an independent advisory body with 3 functions:

- preparing a 30-year infrastructure strategy for Victoria, which we review and update every 3 to 5 years
- advising the government on specific infrastructure matters
- publishing research on infrastructure-related issues.

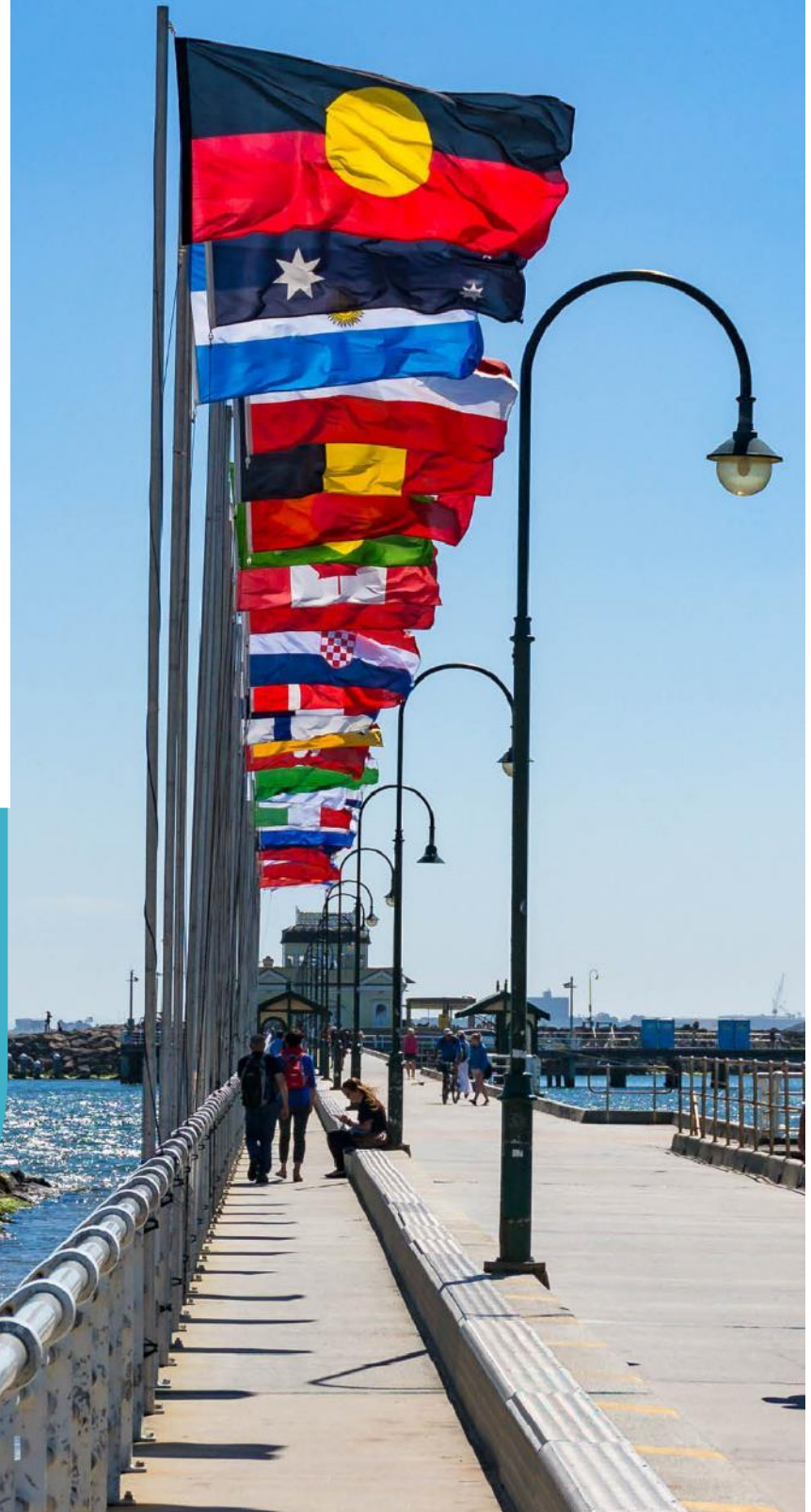
Infrastructure Victoria also helps government departments and agencies develop sectoral infrastructure plans.

Infrastructure Victoria aims to take a long-term, evidence-based view of infrastructure planning, and we inform community discussion about infrastructure provision.

Infrastructure Victoria does not directly oversee or fund infrastructure projects.

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 First Peoples' communities. We recognise that Victoria's infrastructure is built on land that has been managed by Aboriginal people for millennia.





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Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy

Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy makes recommendations to the Victorian Government about infrastructure. Infrastructure Victoria develops the strategy and updates it every 3 to 5 years.

We are an independent advisory agency, and we make recommendations in the strategy based on evidence, discussions with stakeholders and the community, modelling and analysis, and other research tools.

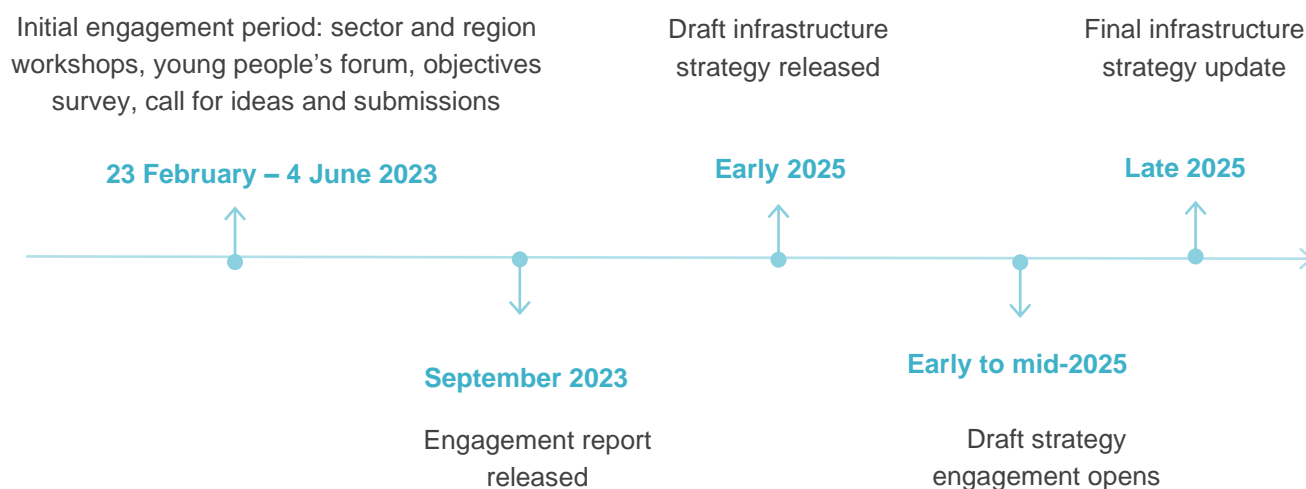
The statewide, evidence-based infrastructure strategy covers all types of infrastructure. We develop it in consultation with stakeholders and the community. We released the first infrastructure strategy in 2016 and updated it in 2021. The 30-year strategy is tabled in the Victorian Parliament and the government has adopted more than 90% of our recommendations.

We are now preparing the next update of Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy. We plan to deliver it in 2025 and the Victorian Government is required to respond to our recommendations.

The 2025–2055 infrastructure strategy helps answer questions such as:

- How and where should infrastructure be delivered to support fairer access for all Victorians?
- How can we better use our infrastructure and make it more productive?
- How can infrastructure help reduce the impacts of climate change, and be adapted to withstand more frequent and extreme weather events?
- How can infrastructure respond to change and disruption including population growth and new technology?

Timeline



Engagement summary

Infrastructure decisions affect everyone. Infrastructure Victoria used many different engagement techniques to reach different people and organisations in our first strategy engagement phase.

As we update the strategy, we want to engage with Victorians meaningfully and transparently. This report summarises the first phase of our strategy engagement program. It documents the different ways we engaged with people, and the core feedback people gave us.

Infrastructure Victoria used different methods to hear from Victorians during our initial strategy engagement program, held between February and June 2023. We asked Victorians to help set the objectives of the 2025 strategy, define the major infrastructure challenges and opportunities, and propose infrastructure options and policies that address them.

The outcomes of a 30-year infrastructure strategy will most impact today's young people during their lives. This meant we particularly wanted to hear from young Victorians. To do this, we ran a deliberative engagement forum which had 168 expressions of interest from people aged 18 to 25 years across Victoria. Our engagement partners randomly selected 39 people broadly representative of Victoria's young population. The forum gave them a chance to deeply consider infrastructure issues and tell us about their priorities for the future. It produced insights that will strengthen the strategy and help us refine its objectives.

We also wanted to hear from regional Victorians, who face distinct challenges and opportunities. We held regional stakeholder workshops to hear directly from local community representatives. Our young people's forum also included young people who live in regional areas.

We held discussions with First Peoples' representatives including Registered Aboriginal Parties and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to hear their perspectives and understand the goals important to them. This is part of an ongoing conversation to integrate Victorian First Peoples' perspectives into the updated infrastructure strategy, and better understand First Peoples perspectives on all our work.

We gave Victorians many avenues to engage, including calling for ideas and submissions, asking people to complete an online survey, and hosting sector workshops to hear from infrastructure stakeholders. A diverse and extensive group of Victorians took part in these engagement activities and gave us feedback.

Victorians had many opportunities to take part in setting the objectives for the strategy, including:



Open call for ideas and submissions

Victorians could contribute to the strategy content and recommendations. Stakeholders sent us detailed submissions and evidence.



Objectives consultation survey

The survey helped us to understand community priorities for infrastructure. These will feed into strategy objectives that better reflect these priorities.



Young people's forum

On 17 and 20 May, we held a young people's forum for 39 Victorians aged 15 to 25 years. They answered the question: *what matters most to Victorians and how can infrastructure help achieve it?*



State of infrastructure assessment consultations

We consulted stakeholders from different sectors, regions and government departments to have accurate and contemporary information about Victoria's infrastructure.

Informed by the feedback we received from our engagement activities, Infrastructure Victoria developed the following 6 objectives to guide the update of Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy. These objectives lay out the goals the strategy will aspire to achieve:



We heard people's priorities

This first phase of engagement gave Victorians the chance to influence the objectives of the 2025 strategy and shape its direction. People told us they highly valued action on climate change, managing water wisely, access to public transport, using resources efficiently, and achieving better social equity.

We promoted our engagement opportunities using multiple channels, including social and mainstream media, the Engage Victoria website and our own website, and by directly contacting thousands of stakeholders and all Victorian councils by email.

People who chose to take part are likely to have a higher interest in, and awareness of, infrastructure and sustainability issues than the general Victorian population. When drawing conclusions from the engagement feedback, we kept in mind this self-selection bias where participants choose to participate rather than being randomly selected from a demographically representative group.

Climate change

Both stakeholders and community members strongly supported action on climate change. This includes mitigating the impacts of climate change, as well as adapting to the impacts of a changing climate.

In all our engagement activities, people reported that reducing greenhouse gas emissions was a priority for them. During specific regional and sector engagements, stakeholders said that while Victoria had a clear target of net zero emissions by 2045, they did not clearly understand the pathway to reach this goal.

People responding to our survey took a long-term view to the role of infrastructure and its impact on climate. For example, they prioritised reducing greenhouse gas emissions over keeping short-term energy costs low.

Water

In our objectives survey, young people's forum, and in the regional and sector workshops, people identified better water management as a priority. For example, young people attending our forum selected sustainable water management as a key idea. They noted the risks of water scarcity and the need for secure water supplies for communities and food growers.

In many of our engagement activities, people mentioned the 2022 Victorian floods. Stakeholders felt that the floods revealed problems with Victoria's resilience to disasters, water infrastructure management, and land use. Some stakeholders noted that climate change might mean Victoria experiences more extreme cycles of flood and drought.

Transport

The people we engaged with often discussed transport infrastructure. They thought transport infrastructure decisions could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and better connect people with opportunities.

Some stakeholders wanted transport infrastructure to support people to use public and active transport more often. They thought low density housing, low levels of infrastructure and services, and lack of integration between transport modes was preventing this change. Young people also raised issues of safety on public transport as a barrier. In our objectives survey, participants favoured more space for cycling lanes and walking paths over road space for cars.

People told us that transport services have not kept pace in areas experiencing high population growth. They thought this was creating barriers to accessing economic and community opportunities.

Doing more with less

Stakeholders observed the tension between infrastructure demanded by a rapidly growing population, constrained government budgets, and scarce natural resources.

Several submissions and feedback from the youth forum encouraged Infrastructure Victoria to consider circular economy principles, which prioritises reuse and limiting waste, to do more with less. Stakeholders in all infrastructure sectors raised the benefits of making the most of existing infrastructure. They proposed measures to get more out of existing infrastructure, such as managing demand, maintenance, and using technology.

Better social equity

When we discussed opportunities to improve fairness and social equity, people talked about a lack of affordable housing and not having access to opportunities. They highlighted increasing costs of living which have added further barriers.

Stakeholders in Melbourne's growth areas and regional Victoria reported residents had difficulties accessing services and opportunities, causing harm and negative impacts for their lives. People mentioned deteriorating housing affordability during all our engagement activities. People described how high housing costs had other negative consequences, especially for people experiencing disadvantage.

Many submissions provided links to relevant reports, research, and other sources of evidence. We will consider all the ideas, submissions and reports submitted. They will feed into the development of the draft updated strategy.

Call for ideas and submissions

We called for ideas from both individuals and organisations on the Engage Victoria website. People told us about their ideas to act on climate change, cater to growing populations, invest in housing and transport infrastructure, and improve their local communities.

We asked for ideas and submissions

From 23 February to 4 June 2023 Infrastructure Victoria put out a call for ideas from individuals and organisations to inform our next strategy. We used the Victorian Government's online platform, Engage Victoria, to invite community members to give us their ideas. They could use the detailed submissions form to include evidence and data to support their ideas. We welcomed short ideas and detailed submissions relevant to 4 areas we highlighted for the next strategy update:

- doing more with less
- navigating change and disruption
- improving social equity through access
- mitigating and adapting to our changing climate.

When sending us detailed ideas, we asked people to include:

- some information about who wrote the idea
- what mattered to them – the problems they hoped to solve, the opportunities they hoped to realise and the outcomes and benefits they believed the idea could provide
- what strategic ideas they were proposing that would achieve the desired outcomes
- why they thought the proposed ideas were better than other options
- what sources of information Infrastructure Victoria needed to consider when developing the 30-year infrastructure strategy for Victoria.

We heard about climate change, growing populations, urban change and local projects

We received 115 responses to our call for ideas and submissions. Detailed submissions made up 66% of the responses. Responses were fairly evenly split between individuals and organisations.

Many submissions called for urgent action on climate change, including both mitigation and adaptation measures. Several suggested valuing carbon emissions reductions during the lifecycle of infrastructure projects. For example, the Victorian Transport Action Group noted in its submission that modelling of infrastructure projects should *'prioritise modelling the whole-of-life emissions associated with the construction and operation of any new infrastructure projects. This modelling must include scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and address the transport-induced changes in land use patterns'*.

Many submissions described the challenges of a rapidly growing population. They documented possible tensions between delivering infrastructure for a growing population, labour shortages and constrained government budgets. Some said this escalated the priority of doing more with less. The Victorian Council of Social Service submission highlighted: *'Delivering high-quality infrastructure and integrated services is getting more expensive, with ongoing labour shortages and rising material costs. Governments today and in the future will likely face increasing constraints in delivering infrastructure and services.'*

People also discussed the relevance of circular economy principles, such as reuse and minimising waste, for infrastructure policy. The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering recommended that Infrastructure Victoria *'embed circular economy principles into the strategy'*.

Stakeholders believe that affordable housing, investment in public and active transport, and sustainable city development, could help improve social equity especially for areas of disadvantage. The City of Geelong's submission voiced this as *'Inequality and disadvantage must be key factors for prioritising investment in infrastructure and services, recognising areas of significant locational disadvantage.'*

Submissions from individuals included local ideas such as upgrades to specific roads, new bus, tram, and train services, urban greening, and upgrades to local park facilities. The themes emerging from the submissions have helped us in developing the objectives of the draft strategy.

We will further consider the detailed suggestions when we develop and evaluate recommendations for the strategy. Where appropriate, we will follow up with individuals and organisations to further discuss their ideas. All public submissions are published on our website.

Objectives survey

By understanding Victorians' priorities for infrastructure, Infrastructure Victoria can develop strategy objectives that reflect the community's preferences. For example, people strongly expressed their preference for action on climate change.

The infrastructure strategy objectives define the strategy's aspirations and help set its scope. They reflect the outcomes Victorians value.

In previous versions of the strategy, Infrastructure Victoria asked for feedback on a draft set of objectives. This meant people limited their feedback to the detailed wording of the objectives. By probing more deeply into Victorians' values, we hoped to better understand the community's preferences and attitudes.

We promoted an objectives survey using our website, social media and by directly emailing thousands of stakeholders. We told them about the consultation and explained how to take part.

We asked people about their choices and priorities

The survey first presented a series of scenarios and asked people to choose their preferred outcome. We wanted to challenge them to consider difficult choices that the Victorian Government needs to make within its budget. This helped us understand how Victorians assess different and competing future options.

The second part of the survey invited people to identify how they felt the Victorian Government should prioritise a set of outcomes when planning for and delivering infrastructure.

We also provided a chance for people to write their own responses to open-ended questions about how infrastructure should contribute to Victoria over the next 30 years.


We heard about transport, sustainable development, affordable housing, and timely infrastructure delivery


A total of 271 Victorians completed the survey between 23 February and 9 April 2023.


From the options presented in the survey, people most strongly preferred:


- More street space for public transport, walking and cycling over more street space for cars.
- Investing in infrastructure that is long-lasting and resilient over building infrastructure as quickly and cheaply as possible.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions quickly over keeping short-term energy prices low.
- Quickly reducing waste and encourage recycling over gradually progressing recycling reforms with lower cost increases.
- Keeping water for the environment over keeping water for people and businesses.
- Prioritising access to services for new social housing, even if it costs more, over new social housing being delivered as cheaply as possible.


When asked to prioritise possible outcomes for planning and delivering infrastructure, they ranked the following outcomes highest:


- 

Achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions
- 

Keep the air and water clean
- 

Help protect people and nature from climate change and its impacts
- 

Help protect and repair natural environments and ecosystems
- 

Provide enough water for all
- 

Help everyone to have a quality education and learn during their lives

People most often discussed transport infrastructure, including wanting more public transport services across Victoria, less congestion and lower greenhouse gas emissions from transport. They also prioritised reducing emissions from the energy system. One respondent noted *'Electric cars will not save us, we must move away from personal cars towards shared transport.'*

People talked about their aspirations for their communities. They wanted smaller, sustainable communities, with more tree cover and open space. People were critical of urban sprawl and over-development.

They wanted infrastructure policy to focus on long-term outcomes, for infrastructure to be delivered when it was needed, and for infrastructure to support the development of social and affordable housing.

People rated environmental objectives very highly. They identified climate change, social equity and managing population growth as major areas of focus for the strategy. The following comment from a survey respondent captures this sentiment *'Climate change is the largest risk to our society and our infrastructure. Solutions should also address short-term and local issues and objectives, though the overall focus must be on protecting our communities and environments in the long term.'*

Our engagement partner, MosaicLab, put together a [detailed report on the objectives survey](#).

Young people's forum

We hosted a young people's forum to hear their aspirations and ideas directly. Young people gave us their 10 big ideas on responding to climate change, using resources efficiently, and being inclusive and adaptable.

Infrastructure Victoria held a young people's forum over two sessions on 17 and 20 May 2023. Thirty-nine young people aged 15 to 25 came together to learn about and discuss the challenges and priorities for infrastructure over the next 30 years. Together, they formed ideas to address these challenges and presented a report to Infrastructure Victoria.

We selected the participants using an expression of interest process. We advertised the event on social media, and through schools and universities, councils and youth-focused organisations, from April to early May 2023. We received 168 expressions of interest, and Sortition Foundation randomised applications to reflect the diversity of Victoria's youth population as closely as possible.

The young people were paid \$140 for their time, and we helped those coming from regional Victoria to pay for their travel costs.

We asked young people about their future aspirations

We asked these young Victorians about the challenges they think we should focus on and how they want to live now and in future. They thought about how we can make the most of our resources, improve social equity and be more adaptable in a rapidly changing world.

We recruited young people from every part of Victoria to work on the following task:

'What matters most to Victorians and how does infrastructure help achieve it?'

They met first in an online meet-and-greet session to hear more about the task and determine their rules for engagement.

The all-day in-person forum began with an activity to help participants understand the challenges of long-term infrastructure planning. Then, an 'infrastructure of the future' exercise gave participants the chance to step into the role of infrastructure planners. This helped them gain insights into the complexities and trade-offs involved in prioritising infrastructure projects. In groups, they were asked to think about a region assigned to them, and how they would prioritise their advice about future infrastructure needs.

In small groups, participants had the opportunity to speak with 7 experts across different infrastructure fields – from transport, roads and urban planning to policy and sustainability. They asked questions of each speaker on the following topics:

- doing more with less
- navigating change and disruption
- adapting to the impacts of a changing climate
- improving social equity.

Young people gave us their big ideas

These activities helped participants to think deeply about the challenges and opportunities for infrastructure in Victoria. In the afternoon, participants had a chance to think about what matters to them in the future, and how infrastructure could help achieve this. The young people collectively developed 10 big ideas by drawing on their lived experience and the knowledge they gained from questioning experts.

At the end of the forum, the young people presented their *Big ideas report* to Jonathan Spear, Chief Executive of Infrastructure Victoria. You can read MosaicLab's detailed report on the young people's forum [here](#). The following infographic summarises the young people's big ideas:



Sector workshops

In 2021, we assessed the state of Victoria's infrastructure and published our findings in *Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021–2051 volume 2*. In 2023, we consulted with organisations to hear about recent major changes in each infrastructure sector.

The *Infrastructure Victoria Act 2015* requires Infrastructure Victoria to include an assessment of the current state of infrastructure in Victoria as part of the strategy update.

Over February to May 2023, we consulted with stakeholders working in each infrastructure sector to get accurate and contemporary information about Victoria's infrastructure. This included government and non-government stakeholders. For non-government stakeholders, we held 9 workshops in May 2023 covering each infrastructure sector.

Participants also helped us document the most significant infrastructure-related opportunities and challenges in each sector.

We consulted with stakeholders from these sectors:



Transport infrastructure including roads, public transport, and walking and cycling infrastructure



Energy infrastructure such as electricity and gas generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure



Water infrastructure for example, the water grid and water treatment plants



Environment infrastructure such as waste management facilities, urban parks and tree canopy



Justice and emergency services infrastructure including courts, prisons, police stations, and fire and rescue stations



Culture, sport, and community infrastructure such as sport and recreation, cultural, and community facilities



Health, families, and social housing infrastructure including hospitals and social housing



Digital connectivity infrastructure including cable, fibre, wireless and satellite networks, towers, poles and data centres



Education and training infrastructure for example, schools, TAFE, and kindergarten facilities

We asked stakeholders about future challenges and opportunities

Our workshops brought together different people with an active involvement in each sector. Participants included independent policy analysts, infrastructure planners and operators, infrastructure users, consumer groups and government agencies. We wanted to understand:

- significant developments affecting the sector's infrastructure since 2021
- the main infrastructure challenges in the sector
- significant infrastructure opportunities to address these challenges.

Stakeholders told us about systemic challenges and the difficulty of reform

During the workshops, we heard that many changes since 2021 are affecting most sectors:



Cost of living pressures and higher interest rates



Ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic



Workforce shortages and return of immigration to Victoria



Start of treaty negotiations between Victoria's First Peoples and the Victorian Government



More attention to achieving net zero, climate resilience and climate mitigation



Increased cyber security risk



Flooding in Victoria

The workshop participants told us about:

- their desire for more strategic planning
- the shortcomings of some governance arrangements
- changing the ways people use existing infrastructure
- finding approaches to deal with high-impact, low-probability events
- the effect of infrastructure decisions on industries and households.

Stakeholders proposed opportunities for Victoria and identified challenges.

Region workshops

Infrastructure Victoria held region consultation workshops to hear about challenges and opportunities from the perspective of people living and working in those communities. They told us that shared challenges can manifest differently in rural and regional Victoria compared to Melbourne.

In May 2023, we held 5 workshops. We grouped the regions using the Victorian Government's 9 regional partnership areas. We held 3 workshops for regional stakeholders, one for Melbourne outer growth areas and one for metropolitan Melbourne, as follows:

- Gippsland and Ovens-Murray regions
- Barwon, Great South Coast, Central Highlands regions
- Goulburn, Loddon Campaspe, Mallee and Wimmera Southern Mallee regions
- metropolitan Melbourne
- outer Melbourne growth areas.



Source: <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/partnerships>

We asked stakeholders about future challenges and opportunities

We wanted to explore 3 main questions in the region workshops:

- Tell us about infrastructure in your region and what has changed since our 2021 assessment?
- What are your ideas for updating the 30-year strategy?
- What is your advice for Infrastructure Victoria?

We heard about climate change, resilience, and population changes

We received over 100 ideas to help inform the 2025 update to the infrastructure strategy, and 85 pieces of advice for us to consider. The themes emerging from the workshops have helped us in developing the objectives of the draft strategy and will inform the state of infrastructure and recommendations of the draft strategy.

Participants reinforced major issues including climate change, achieving net zero greenhouse gas emission, resilience to natural disasters and population change. They told us the unique ways these problems manifest in local communities.

People attending the region workshops talked about transport, water, energy, health facilities and housing. They wanted to hear more about how communities can continue to do more with less and achieve better outcomes.

They also observed changes in the number of Victorians choosing to work, live and visit regional Victoria, and told us how infrastructure can support communities to address those changes. They wanted us to consider strategic, long-term issues, but also consider their effects and relevance for unique local communities.

Strategy objectives and next steps

Infrastructure Victoria is working towards the next update of the state's 30-year infrastructure strategy.

Strategy objectives

Informed by the feedback we received across engagement activities, Infrastructure Victoria developed the following 6 objectives to guide the update of the 30-year infrastructure strategy. These objectives are of equal weight and specify the ultimate goals the strategy will aspire to achieve. Infrastructure cannot accomplish them alone but can make a substantial contribution. We will expand on each of these objectives in the strategy.



Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

Victoria has a high productivity economy that creates well-paid jobs, attracts investment and facilitates trade. It does so while also continually reducing the environmental impacts of production and consumption.



Aboriginal people have self-determination and equal outcomes to other Victorians.

Victoria's Aboriginal people have the power and resources to make decisions about their services, infrastructure, communities and future. Victoria has closed the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Victorians. Victorian infrastructure reflects respectful engagement with Aboriginal communities, draws on their knowledge, and celebrates their history, culture and values.



Victorians are healthy and safe

Victorians achieve and maintain good physical and mental health. They are safe from harm.



Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks

Victoria can minimise the impact of adverse future events. Victoria's greatest future risk is the impact of climate change, but it also faces risks of economic, technological, geopolitical, health or other environmental disasters and crises.



Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services, and opportunities

Victorians can access housing, jobs, services, and opportunities to develop their capabilities, support their wellbeing, connect with other people, and take part in civic, community and cultural life.



Victoria has a thriving natural environment

Victoria's ecosystems are biodiverse and clean. Victoria does not pollute or put waste in the air, water, land, and natural ecosystems. This includes producing net zero greenhouse gas emissions that pollute Earth's atmosphere and contribute to dangerous climate change.

Next steps

We thank everyone who took part in this first phase of strategy engagement. In all our engagement activities, people came with goodwill, a shared understanding of the potential for infrastructure to improve the lives of Victorians, and a willingness to engage in difficult questions of trade-offs and priorities.

We will record and consider all the information we received through engagement. The feedback, ideas, and views from participants will help shape our next update of the infrastructure strategy. Where appropriate, we will continue to consult with stakeholders on specific issues.

We plan to deliver a draft of the next strategy in early 2025. Victorians will have the chance to give feedback on the draft strategy. We plan to finalise the strategy by the end of 2025.

Sustainability note

Infrastructure Victoria is committed to reducing its impact on the environment. This report is available in accessible version online or in PDF format only.

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