

Submission Form: Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy

The following submission outlines my feedback and recommendations in response to Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy, with a focus on practical, community-informed and technology-enabled solutions to improve outcomes across the state.

I agree to Infrastructure Victoria's privacy collection statement. I give permission for Infrastructure Victoria to publish my submission on its website anonymously, with identifying personal information to be redacted.

1. **Mandatory Crime Prevention Audits in Infrastructure Planning**

All infrastructure projects, regardless of scale or sector, should be required to undergo a comprehensive Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit as a standard part of the planning and design process. Incorporating CPTED principles ensures that the built environment is proactively assessed for opportunities to reduce crime and enhance public safety through thoughtful design. This includes considerations such as natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement, access control, and ongoing maintenance. Making such audits mandatory would promote consistent, evidence-based decision-making that supports safer, more inclusive public spaces. By embedding crime prevention into infrastructure planning, governments can reduce the social and economic costs of crime, foster community wellbeing, and improve perceptions of safety—ultimately contributing to more liveable and resilient communities.

2. **Prioritising Public Housing Over Social Housing**

I believe there should be a renewed focus on public housing, rather than continued reliance on the expansion of social housing models. While social housing—delivered by community and not-for-profit providers, plays an important role, it does not offer the same long-term safeguards or systemic stability as publicly owned and managed housing. Public housing ensures direct government responsibility for the provision, maintenance and oversight of affordable housing, preserving affordability in perpetuity and upholding consistent standards. It also provides greater security of tenure and more robust tenant protections, reducing the risk of housing precarity. Unlike social housing, which often depends on complex funding arrangements and fluctuating organisational capacity, public housing represents a durable and equitable public asset. For these reasons, investment in public housing should be prioritised as a matter of social justice, economic prudence and long-term infrastructure planning.

3. **Supporting TAFE Expansion in Regional Victoria**

I strongly support the expansion of TAFE infrastructure into large regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura, and the Latrobe Valley. These regional cities are not only growing rapidly but also facing workforce shortages across essential sectors like healthcare, construction, community services, and renewable energy. By expanding TAFE campuses in these areas, we can provide local residents with real opportunities to upskill and retrain close to home—without the added burden of relocation or long commutes. In my view, this is not just a matter of workforce planning but of fairness and equity. People in regional Victoria deserve the same access to quality vocational education as those in metropolitan areas. Investing in regional TAFEs will strengthen local economies, improve access to stable employment, and support long-term community resilience.

4. Strengthening Public Transport Through Coordination, Capacity and Safety

I strongly support continued investment in Victoria's public transport network, but believe it must be accompanied by better coordination across all modes and a significant increase in capacity. In many areas, particularly outer metropolitan and regional centres, public transport remains disjointed, with train, tram and bus services poorly aligned. Connections are often unreliable or infrequent, making journeys unnecessarily long and inconvenient—especially for those without access to a private vehicle. To genuinely serve the community, public transport must operate as a unified system, with integrated timetabling, clear wayfinding, and seamless ticketing. In addition, service frequency and vehicle capacity must be expanded to meet the demands of a growing population and to ensure the network remains a viable alternative to car travel.

I also believe that the presence of Protective Services Officers (PSOs) should be expanded beyond train stations to include trams and buses, particularly on busy routes and during evenings. Public safety is a key factor influencing people's willingness to use public transport—especially for women, young people, and the elderly. At present, PSO deployment is limited and mode-specific, which creates gaps in coverage and contributes to uneven perceptions of safety across the network. A more visible and accessible security presence would not only deter antisocial behaviour but also provide reassurance to passengers and staff. Expanding PSO coverage across all forms of public transport is a practical step toward making the entire network safer, more welcoming, and better used.

5. Safe Streets Require Proper and Timely Maintenance

Safe streets are not just about speed limits and signage, they also depend on well-maintained road surfaces. In my view, preventative maintenance, particularly the timely and proper repair of potholes, needs to be given far greater priority across Victoria. Damaged roads pose a significant safety risk to all road users, especially cyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians, and can contribute to crashes, vehicle damage and injuries. However, even when potholes are addressed, the quality of the repair is often substandard, leaving uneven surfaces, bumps and new deterioration soon after the work is done. This creates an ongoing cycle of reactive maintenance that is neither cost-effective nor conducive to public safety. I believe we need a more proactive and accountable approach to local road maintenance, one that prioritises long-term quality and safety outcomes rather than short-term patchwork solutions.

6. Supporting Shared Use of School Facilities

I strongly support the recommendation to encourage government schools to share their sports fields and facilities with the local community outside of school hours. My local school has excellent facilities that could benefit many local residents on weekends and evenings. However, they are surrounded by high fences and remain inaccessible when not in use by students. This is a missed opportunity to maximise the value of public assets and promote physical activity, social connection, and community wellbeing. With appropriate support for maintenance and clear guidelines for use, schools could safely and effectively open their grounds for shared use. Targeted funding to assist with upgrades and ongoing upkeep would provide schools with the resources and confidence to participate, and would help foster stronger connections between schools and their surrounding communities.

7. Community-Led Planning for Health Infrastructure

I support the recommendation to invest in the maintenance, upgrade, and expansion of community health facilities, but believe this must be driven by meaningful and ongoing community engagement. Local communities are best placed to identify the gaps and priorities in their own health infrastructure, particularly when it comes to smaller, place-based facilities that may otherwise be overlooked in

statewide planning processes. To ensure these investments are responsive and equitable, there should be annual engagement with community stakeholders, including health service users, local organisations, and councils. This is especially important in regional and outer suburban areas where health needs can be highly localised. In my view, the Victorian Government should also allocate a portion of its health infrastructure funding to small grants that support upgrades to community-identified priorities, ensuring that modest but critical improvements are not delayed or forgotten.

8. Establishing a Bulk-Billed After-Hours GP Home Visit Service

Victoria should establish a bulk-billed, after-hours GP home visit service, similar to the model successfully operating in Queensland. Services like "Dr To U" offer home visits from qualified general practitioners during evenings and weekends, with no out-of-pocket costs for Medicare card holders. This approach provides timely, accessible healthcare for patients who may otherwise attend an emergency department for non-urgent issues. In my view, implementing such a service in Victoria would expand equitable access to primary care and significantly reduce demand on hospitals, particularly after hours.

This service could be coordinated by Ambulance Victoria, using a model where a diploma-qualified healthcare worker or Ambulance Transport Attendant assists by driving the GP to patients' homes and supporting non-clinical aspects of the visit. This would ensure appropriate use of resources while maintaining clinical safety and efficiency. Adopting this model would not only deliver improved health outcomes for patients but also support a more sustainable and responsive health system for the future.

9. Supporting Accessible and Bulk-Billed Digital Healthcare

I support the continued expansion of digital healthcare services in Victoria as a practical and necessary step towards improving access to timely medical care, particularly for people in regional areas, those with mobility challenges, or individuals managing chronic conditions. Virtual consultations, remote monitoring, and digital health platforms can ease pressure on the hospital system and provide more flexible options for patients. However, it is critical that these services remain affordable and accessible to all. For that reason, I believe digital healthcare should be bulk-billed under Medicare wherever clinically appropriate. Without this, there is a risk that digital health will widen, rather than reduce, health inequities. A bulk-billed digital model would ensure that no Victorian is excluded from receiving quality healthcare due to financial barriers or geography.

10. Powering Government Infrastructure with Renewable Energy

Every government building and powered infrastructure project in Victoria should be equipped with solar energy systems, supported by electric grid backup where necessary. In my view, this is a practical and responsible step towards reducing emissions, lowering long-term energy costs, and setting a strong example of environmental leadership. Government assets such as schools, hospitals, transport facilities, and community centres are ideally positioned to harness solar power due to their size, roof space, and consistent energy use. Investing in solar infrastructure not only aligns with the state's renewable energy and net zero targets, but also ensures greater resilience in the face of rising energy prices and potential disruptions. Where continuous power is critical, solar systems can be supported by battery storage and reliable grid backup to maintain service delivery while significantly cutting carbon emissions.

11. Expanding Access to Green Space in Residential Areas

I agree with the recommendation to better use government land for open space and to increase greenery in urban areas. In addition to connecting larger open spaces and planting more trees, there should be a greater focus on creating small local parks within residential neighbourhoods. Too often, new housing developments are made up of dense blocks of homes with very limited access to nearby green space. Even in established suburbs, opportunities exist to repurpose single housing blocks or small parcels of underutilised land as pocket parks. These smaller parks can have a big impact on liveability by giving residents a place to relax, exercise, and connect with nature close to home. A more balanced approach to urban planning that includes accessible green space within walking distance of every household would significantly improve community wellbeing and environmental outcomes.

12. Embedding Community Development and Wellbeing in Infrastructure Planning

I support the development of infrastructure sector plans to help shape Victoria's cities, but believe these plans must go beyond physical infrastructure and explicitly incorporate community development, recreation, and wellbeing. Infrastructure is not just about transport, energy, or buildings—it is also about creating connected, healthy, and vibrant communities. Sector plans should be developed with an understanding of how infrastructure can support social cohesion, mental health, cultural inclusion, and active lifestyles. This includes planning for facilities such as libraries, sports grounds, community centres, and green spaces alongside core infrastructure. By embedding these elements into long-term infrastructure planning, Victoria can build more liveable cities that meet the full range of community needs, not just their functional ones.

13. Using Infrastructure Contributions to Support Housing Supply

While I support the simplification of Victoria's infrastructure contribution schemes, I believe we should also consider lowering contribution rates in areas where it will directly support the delivery of new housing. In particular, reduced or discounted contributions could be used as an incentive to encourage housing development in well-located areas with existing infrastructure, or where there is a clear need for more affordable housing. High infrastructure charges can act as a barrier to new developments, especially for smaller or community-based housing providers. A more flexible approach that balances funding for essential infrastructure with the urgent need to increase housing supply would better support both planning and social objectives.

14. Supporting Modern Traffic Technology and Public Access to Information

I strongly support the use of modern traffic control technology, including sensors and cameras, to improve the efficiency and safety of travel across Victoria's major roads. Using real-time data to manage congestion, adjust traffic signals, and respond quickly to incidents is a smart and effective way to keep people moving. However, I believe this technology should also benefit the public directly. Live camera feeds and real-time traffic information should be made easily accessible so that drivers can check conditions before they leave home and make informed decisions about their route. This would help reduce frustration, improve travel times, and enhance safety. Public access to this information is a simple yet powerful way to get even greater value out of the investment in smart traffic systems.

In addition, I believe that all new traffic cameras installed under this program should be Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) enabled and capable of enforcement functions. This would allow for more effective detection of speeding, unregistered vehicles, and other road safety breaches, helping to reduce the road toll and improve compliance with road rules. Expanding the enforcement capability of traffic technology would not only deter dangerous behaviour but also support a culture of accountability and safer driving across the network.

15. Opposing Additional Road User Charges

I strongly oppose the introduction of new road user charges or congestion pricing schemes. Victorians already pay for the construction and maintenance of roads through a combination of taxes, vehicle registration fees, fuel excise, and tolls on many major roads. Introducing further charges would unfairly penalise everyday drivers, particularly those who have limited access to public transport or who live in outer suburbs and regional areas where driving is often the only practical option. These proposals disproportionately impact working families, shift workers, and people on lower incomes who cannot simply choose to avoid travel during peak times. Rather than layering additional costs on motorists, the focus should be on improving the existing road network and public transport options so people actually have viable alternatives to driving.

16. Supporting Rail Freight Investment

I support this recommendation because shifting more freight to rail is a smart and sustainable approach. Taking trucks off the road reduces traffic congestion, lowers emissions, and improves road safety. Investing in a reliable and efficient rail freight network will make freight transport more productive and better for the environment.

17. Supporting Off-Peak Freight with Noise Protections

I support the proposal to encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas, as it can help ease congestion and improve the efficiency of freight movement. However, this support is contingent upon implementing strict noise restrictions to protect the amenity of nearby residents. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has previously raised concerns about the noise impact of freight activities in Melbourne's inner west, highlighting the need for careful management of such initiatives. Off-peak deliveries must be carefully managed to ensure that the benefits of reduced daytime traffic do not come at the cost of increased noise disturbance during evenings or overnight hours.

18. Decentralising Government to Better Represent Regional Communities

There should be stronger government representation in regional Victoria, including relocating the primary offices of more government agencies to regional centres. With modern technology and tools such as Microsoft Teams, there is no longer a need for all government bodies to be centrally based in Melbourne. Locating agencies closer to the communities they serve would improve responsiveness, build local knowledge, and contribute to regional economic development. For example, the Country Fire Authority exists to serve regional and rural communities, yet its headquarters is in Melbourne. There is no practical reason it could not be based in a regional city like Bendigo or Ballarat. Establishing government offices in regional areas would help decentralise decision-making, reduce the concentration of resources in the city, and ensure that policies and services are better tailored to the needs of all Victorians. The UK Infrastructure Strategy, for example, includes a goal of relocating 22,000 civil servant positions out of London by 2030.

Conclusion

Victoria's infrastructure strategy must fully embrace the opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies to deliver smarter, more sustainable and more efficient outcomes. By integrating digital systems into infrastructure planning and delivery, including real-time traffic management, virtual healthcare, remote learning, and predictive maintenance, we can reduce demand on overstretched services, improve reliability, and give people more choice in how they live and move around the state. Technology also has a critical role to play in improving public safety and reducing crime, through the

use of surveillance systems, smart lighting, and design approaches that incorporate crime prevention principles from the outset.

Greater use of digital tools can help reduce reliance on private vehicles by making public transport more responsive, enabling more people to work remotely, and supporting local access to essential services. Technology should not be treated as an optional enhancement, but as a core part of delivering resilient, inclusive and future-ready infrastructure. By embedding innovation and digital thinking across all infrastructure sectors, Victoria can build safer, stronger and more liveable communities for generations to come.