

The focus of this submission is on the **Urban Growth Areas** – based on the townships of Beveridge and Wallan.

The strategic objectives I am addressing are:

1. *Victoria has a thriving natural environment*
2. *Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities*
3. *Victorians are healthy and safe*
4. *Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy*

*The towns of Wallan and Beveridge are within Melbourne's urban growth boundary. Both towns are undergoing rapid increases in population. Paddocks are rapidly being consumed by wall-to-wall housing. A monotonous sea of brown roofs is overrunning our once rural landscapes. Suburban ugliness is creeping in and taking hold. **It is difficult to live a prosperous and purposeful life** if you are part of a young family trapped in one of these new suburban estates – particularly if there are no services, and no easy access to nature.*

Victoria has a thriving natural environment

Healthy environment – healthy people. The monotonous sea of brown roofs begs for well-connected green spaces and street trees. There is not enough room in the new tiny backyards.

Draft recommendation 26: Better use government land for open space and greenery

I support the recommendation to a degree. It should include planning strategically at the Precinct Structure Plan level for putting aside land for well-connected public open spaces and greenery.

Recommended action: Incorporate into the Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) for Wallan and Beveridge the parkland recommended for inclusion by the *wallan wallan Regional Park Feasibility Study (March 2022)*.

Reasons for the recommended action: This proposed parkland is the missing link connecting Melbourne to Central Victoria. It is an opportunity not to be missed – before the land is gobbled up by housing. As a biodiversity corridor it would connect the Merri Creek catchment area to those of the Maribyrnong, Goulburn-Broken and Campaspe catchments. It would facilitate the continuation of an off-road track network, for cyclists and walkers, connecting Melbourne to the Central Victorian destinations and beyond of Bendigo and Mansfield. Such a parkland would provide a wonderful opportunity to engage the Wurundjeri traditional owners in land management practices. It would most importantly provide a wonderful recreational space and opportunity for experiencing nature, for the young residents of the current and future dense housing subdivisions planned for Wallan-Beveridge.

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

There appears to be no recommendation regarding jobs.

Draft recommendation 3: Plan and deliver expanded and new schools

I support the recommendation to a degree. It is often forgotten that schools are more than buildings. We need teachers – lots of them. Teaching is no longer an attractive and rewarding profession – particularly for government schools in the urban growth areas. Forward thinking planning for the timely delivery of new schools is essential.

Recommended action: A new high school to service the Wallan Beveridge area. Provide cheap accommodation for teachers willing to teach in the urban growth areas. Perhaps teacher housing could be incorporated into part of the new school construction program.

Reasons for the recommended action: The high school at Wallan is at capacity. Portables have been added to the school campus. The school has difficulty recruiting teachers.

Draft recommendation 4: Expand TAFE in Melbourne's growth areas and some large regional centres

I support the recommendation to a degree.

Recommended action: High school students should have the option to go to TAFE at the beginning of year 10 or year 9.

Reasons for the recommended action: Many students are not academically inclined in growth and regional areas and would benefit by beginning to learn a trade at a younger age. In the past, Victoria's tech schools successfully serviced this purpose.

Draft recommendation 5: Build libraries and aquatic centre for Melbourne's growing communities

I support the recommendation to a degree.

Recommended action: Fund Mitchell Shire Council for the proposed Greenhill Recreation Precinct in Wallan. This includes an Aquatics Centre, which includes a learn to swim pool.

Reasons for the recommended action: The number of children who cannot swim has increased in Wallan and Beveridge. Wallan and Beveridge have large populations of young people, yet no pool.

Victorians are healthy and safe

Draft recommendation 15: Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

I support the recommendation to a degree. It should also include connections between Melbourne, Victoria's regional cities and towns. The future of electric bikes and scooters must be planned for.

Recommended action: Support/fund the proposed Merri Trail linking Melbourne to Wallan and the proposed Bendigo to Wallan off-road trail. Plan/upgrade paths for electric bikes and scooters. Make safe spaces for children to learn to ride a bike.

Reasons for the recommended action: These two trails are foundational to linking Melbourne to Central Victoria. They would encourage adventure tourism and healthy lifestyles. The number people using electric scooters is increasing – particularly in hilly areas. Many children don't know how to ride a bike.

Draft recommendation 16: Help government schools share their grounds

I support the recommendation to a degree. I think schools should also share their facilities with the local community. eg classrooms for adult education in the evening.

Recommended action: Build new schools as shared community centres/facilities - for sporting, cultural and educational activities.

Reasons for the recommended action: An opportunity to make the most of government funding as well as bringing communities closer together. It would enable schools to become more involved in the community.

Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

Draft recommendation 36: Reform infrastructure contributions.

I support the recommendation. The current infrastructure contributions are not enough to support our rapidly growing communities – people need more than just a roof over their head. Too much responsibility is placed on local councils, rates payers and taxpayers to bear the costs – financial, social, and environmental. eg. the Hume Freeway already can't handle the morning traffic, generated by the many new roads funnelled into it – where will the funds for upgrading it come from?

Recommended action: More land to be put aside for open space, community facilities, shopping/service areas for residents. PSPs must also include land reserved for business and industrial parks – places for employment. Roads must be upgraded and extended to handle the increased traffic generated by dense housing subdivisions.

Reasons for the recommended action: Our new estates are in danger of turning into social disasters. Building houses in dense subdivisions with poor access to health and education facilities, green spaces, transport and job opportunities is a product of poor town planning and a lack of funding.

Draft recommendation 41: Make rail freight competitive, reliable and efficient

I support the recommendation.

Recommended action: Support for the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal.

Reasons for the recommended action: Take trucks off the road. Lower carbon emissions. Provide jobs for local residents.